



Re-engagement of Students after an Alternative Education Program

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Declaration of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma by the University of Tasmania, or in any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, no material previously published or written by another person, except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis, nor does the thesis contain any material that infringes copyright.

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Jeff Thomas

Date: 7th September 2016

Statement of Ethical Conduct

The research associated with this thesis abides by the international and Australian codes on human experimentation, and the ruling of the Committees of the University of Tasmania. The Tasmanian Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee's, ethics reference number for this research is H0013516.

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Publications

The following conference presentations, proceedings and published journal articles are directly related to the research contained in this thesis.

Conference Presentations and Proceedings

- Thomas, J., Dymment, J.E. & Moltow, D. (2015, September 7-11). Understanding the complexities of disengagement through a symbolic interactionist lens. *European Conference on Education and Research, Budapest, Hungary*.
- Thomas, J., Dymment, J.E. & Moltow, D. (2014, November 29-December 3). Beyond a typology: Towards a taxonomy of alternative education, *Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Conference, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, QLD*.
- Thomas, J. (2013, June) Engaging adolescents in education: A gathering of minds and experiences. Australian Vocational Education and Training research Association conference, Hobart, TAS.
- Thomas, J. (2013, December), Re-engagement programs - Not just behaviour schools anymore. Presentation, University of Tasmania Postgraduate Conference. Launceston, TAS.

Journal Article

- Thomas, J., Dymment, J., Moltow, D. & Hay, I. (2016). 'It is my decision, and it's really up to me. But they wanted me to do it': An exploration of choice in enrolling in a reengagement program. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1080/13603116.2016.1155665

Abstract

Alternative educational programs for students at risk of not completing high school have been a feature of Australian education for many years, but a recurring concern with these programs is their effectiveness. One claim is that such programs indirectly do harm to students by not encouraging schools and teachers to make the necessary adaptations at the classroom level, and so have the effect of ‘pushing’ students out of mainstream schooling and onto short-term programs that do not advantage their long-term academic or social development.

This study investigated this concern, using an alternative program linked to a mainstream high school. In all, 46 high school students (26 boys and 20 girls, aged 12 to 16) participated in the Reengagement for Disengaged Youth (ReDY) program for around 12 months, over the period 2010—2014. This annex program was designed to support disengaged students to reengage and eventually reintegrate back into a mainstream educational setting. The philosophy of the ReDY program was based on the idea that students could successfully reengage in education if they identified goals, and voluntarily worked to improve, in the academic, social and personal areas that led to their disengagement in mainstream school. It involved three staff members who designed and implemented personalised programs around each student’s reengagement goals. The students in the ReDY program were identified as at risk of not completing secondary school, and were selected if they could demonstrate a desire to work towards their reengagement goals.

The two research questions under investigation in this study were:

- To what extent, and in what ways, was the ReDY program effective?
- For participating students, did this effectiveness extend across cognitive, behavioural and affective dimensions of engagement?

These questions were investigated using data sourced from student and staff interviews along with student survey data and school report data from the mainstream ‘host’ school, gathered from the time before students entered the ReDY program and after they returned to the mainstream environment. The data were coded into each of the three dimensions of cognitive, affective and behavioural engagement, and analysed to determine the strength of engagement of the students before, during and after participation in the ReDY program. The results indicated that the three-dimensional construct of engagement was useful in describing the changing nature of students’ engagement with school. When seen through a three-dimensional lens, disengagement is seen as a complex interaction between a student’s cognitive, affective and behavioural relationship with education.

Many of the common features of effective alternative education programs include relational teaching, a high ratio of staff to students, a ‘wrap around’ approach recognising the whole student, personalised learning, and strategies derived from a positive psychology and a focus on the wellbeing of the whole person and the need consider each student’s academic, social–emotion and behavioural development. These were affirmed as mechanisms that positively influence the process of students’ engagement with schooling; that is, the evidence from this qualitative and quantitative study supports the worth of alternative education programs for students at risk of disconnecting from schooling and supports the use of cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions to evaluate the effectiveness of such programs.

The findings from this study have implications for practice in the area of engaging students in learning and behaviour management in mainstream schools. Teachers and administrators can use the indicators of engagement to identify the early stages of students’ disengagement, and work towards preventing further disengagement and

promoting reengagement. The study also presents implications for alternative education programs aiming to reengage students into mainstream environments. In particular it was noted that strategies to strengthen behavioural skills, such as conduct, attendance and participation, were also used as mechanisms for increasing students' cognitive and affective engagement.

However, further research is called for, especially in the development of pedagogies for effective reengagement, and in the ways in which the environment that mainstream schools provide for disengaged students can strengthen students' cognitive, affective and behavioural engagement and development.

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Acronyms Used in this Thesis

ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
ICSEA	Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage
OfSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PAT	Progressive Assessment Test
ReDY	Reengagement for Disengaged Youth
SES	Socio-Economic Status
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TQA	Tasmanian Qualifications Authority
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Chapter 1: Re-engagement of Students after an Alternative Education Program

Placing Myself in the Research

The idea that education is much more than learning curriculum content has been a consistent driver throughout my various teaching positions in schools, although the real potential of education did not become obvious to me until I was placed in a School in a community with low educational advantage in the Australian state of Tasmania.

This new appointment expanded my understanding of the needs of students who were socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged. For the first time I worked with families who experienced intergenerational disadvantage and welfare dependence, past and current criminal convictions, and seemingly little regard for what I had known as formal schooling. When I first arrived, I accepted that the high school was doing its best, but it was obviously struggling with the sheer volume of students who were disengaging from school and dropping out of education. Three years after I started teaching at the school a new principal was appointed, who was both the first lay and the first female principal the school had had in its 75 year history.

Within weeks of starting, the new principal identified student behaviour management, levels of school attendance, and student motivation as issues that needed to be addressed in the school. She recognised that to improve the school's social, academic and aspirational goals, she first needed to get students to school, get them in class, on task, and wanting to learn. At this point a significant portion of students were being excluded from school through suspensions or expulsions. Disruptive behaviour was often the norm in classrooms, and it was not unusual for teaching days to be interrupted by fights, abuse of students and teachers, and vandalism.

The new principal took an extraordinary approach. Drawing on the traditions of the school as a place for underprivileged and disadvantaged children, she decided that rather than continue to expel the students who were the focus of much negativity and considered to be 'bringing down the reputation of the school', she sought to provide for them. She saw the out-of-control nature of the school as a failing of the school, not of the students. She commissioned an experienced principal from a school in New South Wales to consult on the best way forward. It was on this principal's advice that she decided to initiate a separate unit on the campus for students who were disengaged. Her aim was to better meet the social, emotional and academic needs of this cohort of students, who were not being adequately catered for in the school's mainstream classrooms.

The principal called me for a meeting in August of 2009. She asked whether I would be interested in creating a program for these at-risk students. My acceptance on that day created a shift in my professional career. As part of my planning, I went to an independently run, residential school in New South Wales for students who had been excluded from other schools to observe the program provided. This experience opened my eyes to a completely different type of education from what I was used to. The curriculum strictly adhered to Australian curriculum requirements, yet it was interesting, enjoyable and engaging for the students. The students were learning individually, or in small groups, with staff who seemed more like mentors than teachers. The most striking feature for me, however, was the calm. I observed five units, each consisting of up to ten boys who had been excluded from the State Department of Education schools. Many had violent or criminal histories; none had been successful in school; yet here they were, quietly, enthusiastically, on task and getting their work completed.

My next three years teaching in, and managing, the Reengagement for Disengaged Youth (ReDY) program were some of the most challenging and rewarding of my teaching career, and certainly the time in which my learning curve was the highest. Having the opportunity and responsibility of setting up and managing the ReDY program, I was inspired to research the topic of at-risk high school students and alternative programs. Although I resigned from program to undertake this doctoral study, I still, in part, think of it as ‘my’ program. Accordingly, there is a level of subjectivity in the data and research literature that is inescapable. Managing an alternative education program for at-risk students and evaluating it has provided me with the opportunity to reflect on what schooling can be, and perhaps should be, for all students.

The staff and most of the past students of the ReDY program knew me personally. It is therefore possible that their responses in their self-reflections on the program, via surveys and interviews, were, in a way, written to me personally—not to an anonymous researcher from the university. I don’t want to hide from this personal connection to the ReDY program, for in many ways the data presented here have been produced, analysed and interpreted through the lens of a practitioner-turned-researcher.

The ReDY program, now in its seventh year, has had more than 60 graduates. Between 2010 and 2014, the time that data were gathered for this study, 46 students had enrolled. I was fortunate enough to survey 23 and interview 14 of them for this research. These students, before the arrival of the new principal and the implementation of the alternative educational program available on the school’s campus, would most likely have been expelled or would have chosen to leave the host school. I recently attended the ReDY program’s 11th biennial ‘showcase event’. For one student, this event would be his last as he was going on to Year 11 at a senior college. At the end of the

presentations, this young man's mother asked to say a few words, which highlight the importance of the potential of education to change a student's life:

From the depths of depression, the endless spiral of the black hole that had encompassed [my son's] life, the program became his saviour and his light through that darkness. There are no words to express how grateful I am for all the hard work, the dedication, the patience and compassion that [the ReDY program staff] have continually put into my son. We are so fortunate to have had you all in our lives. Your ability to teach, guide and care for all these children is something we should all be so proud of and it is because of this that [my son] has come so far. It is hard for me to actually believe that it is the end of journey at ReDY I know that he is ready to move on, but a piece of his heart will always be with you guys. Thank you for your kindness and your devotion to him. I feel truly blessed to have had the opportunity to watch my son blossom—as he wasn't—under your care and your guidance. (Program Parent, 2015)

Although the future of this particular alternative educational program is unclear, it is to be hoped that there will always be principals, educators and organisations willing to provide additional programs to give youth who are disengaged the best shot at education. When the ReDY program was being established, I was not aware of the research into effective reengagement, or the pedagogy and strategies for working with students who were disengaged. I, and my colleagues, felt we were largely 'making it up' as we went along. I am now more aware of the research on the topic of students who are disengaged. I am also more aware that there is a body of practical literature that can help in the setting up and running of an effective alternative program. Even so, there still exist considerable gaps in the necessary knowledge regarding students who are disengaged and their relationships with teachers and schooling. Through this research, I

hope to give teachers and educators who are conducting programs for disengaged and at-risk youth additional information to support them in what is a challenging and often an essential part of schooling. In addition, I aim to provide researchers with further theoretical understanding of the concepts and processes of disengagement and reengagement, and a basis on which to develop more inquiry into effective alternative education.

Terminology Used in This Thesis

The terms and labels used in this thesis are context-specific. To orientate the reader, some of the terms used in this thesis will be examined and explained in relation to students who are at risk of disconnecting from school.

Language use in the realm of alternative education has undergone many iterations in defining the particularities, programs and objectives of this area (McGregor & Mills, 2012). The claim is that language embeds power (Smyth & McInerney, 2012), and so it is important to examine the terms used to describe aspects of alternative education in order to better understand some of the connotations associated with those terms. A commonly used term in this area is ‘youth at risk’ (Te Riele, 2007). This term asks the reader to consider ‘at risk from what?’ and ‘who are the non-youth at risk?’; it comes from longitudinal research into the trajectories of students’ educational outcomes (Mitchell, 2016), suggesting that the ‘risk’ is that the student will have poor educational outcomes. This comparison or ‘othering’ is common in researchers’ quests to describe a certain group of people, actions or schools.

The term ‘alternative education’ by definition suggests a different form of education to that typically offered. The concern is that terms can have negative and positive meanings, and for some the word ‘alternative’ may suggest an inferior education, a form that takes students away from opportunities that would, over time,

advance their long term social-emotional and economic development (Zyngier, 2008) while for others alternative education represents an opportunity not available in the typical or available classroom (Lamb, Jackson, Walstab, & Huo, 2015). This tension is at the core of this study, whose focus is on the issue of students' levels of engagement with their schooling and the factors that facilitate and reduce this engagement.

Mainstream/conventional/traditional/regular/normal. There are two issues when referring to the 'mainstream' school. First, in many cases alternative education practices often occur on a mainstream school campus and are embedded in the school's program or annexed and a different program is provided. This means that the so-called dichotomy between alternative and mainstream schooling is not always clear. Typically there is continuity of service delivery so there are likely to be elements of mainstream schooling in alternative programs and elements of alternative education in mainstream classrooms (De Jong & Griffiths, 2006). The model being reviewed in this case study is the annex style program.

The second issue is that terms such as 'regular' education and 'normal' education, by inference, imply that alternative education may be an 'irregular' or an 'abnormal' form of education (Te Riele, 2008). For this reason, the use of the term normal education is not used in this research. Rather the term 'mainstream' is used, partly because it is the common way to refer to education provision that serves the majority, and partly because the analogy of a river, with the main current progressing most of the water downstream, seems appropriate when considering that the water that doesn't get carried down the mainstream often finds a different, or alternative pathway.

Alternative education/flexi schools/behaviour schools/reengagement programs. The term 'alternative education' is also problematic given the myriad types of setting, school and program that fall under its banner (Te Riele, 2007). The historical context

with its various definitions and typologies is discussed in Chapter 2. For simplicity, in this study alternative education refers to an overarching concept of educational approaches that differ from the mainstream program. The notion of a continuum of difference is used as a framework in this thesis.

The term ‘reengagement programs’ is used here specifically to refer to alternative education programs that aim to take students who have disengaged from mainstream education and reintegrate into their mainstream schools or a mainstream education context that has as its focus the completion of high school to Year 12 or its equivalent (Cranston et al., 2016). Further discussion on the definition of reengagement programs can be found in Chapter 2 and Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Schools/programs/provision. Alternative education can take a wide range of forms, from independently run schools to programs run within a mainstream environment. When discussing alternative education as an approach, the term ‘provision’ will be used. When discussing a particular example, the term ‘school’ will be used to refer to a separate campus facility not attached administratively or physically to any other school, and ‘program’ to refer to an initiative run by a school even if it is off-site.

Young people/youth/children/students. As the focus of this study is on the education of young people, the term ‘students’ will be used to clarify that the discussion is about the relationship with and experience of education. The word ‘children’ is typically linked with younger, primary school students. In this study, ‘student’ is used to identify the participants. These students are at the stage of early adolescent development and are developing self-identity and moving towards greater independence from parents and others (Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson, 2005).

Disengaged and re-engaged. The term ‘disengaged’ has been seen as a deficit-oriented label (Callingham, 2013; Smyth & Hattam, 2004; Te Riele, 2010). When used as a label, this term focuses on the ‘lack of life potential’ (Callingham, 2013, p. 51). In this thesis, the term is used as a verb, ‘to disengage’ or ‘to be in the process of disengaging’ from a school or educational institution. Thus it is linked to Archambault, Janosz, Fallu, and Pagani’s (2009) notion that student disengagement is associated with the ‘breakdown of the relationship’ (p. 652) between the student and school (teachers). Student engagement is seen as an enabling and empowering concept that facilitates task learning (Callingham, 2013). In this thesis, student engagement is considered to be on a continuum, moving up or down, from low engagement at one point to higher engagement at another. The student’s transition along this engagement continuum, and the context and factors that enhance or reduce this level of engagement, is a focus of this study.

Emotionally and behaviourally disordered. In the United Kingdom and the United States, it is common to describe students with behaviour difficulties by formally labelling them with a diagnosis of Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties/Disorders (Farmer, Farmer, & Brooks, 2010; Farrell & Tsakalidou, 1999; Rinkel, 2011). This is not the approach used in this research, for while some participating students did have behavioural issues, generally admissions took an individual approach to participants, rather than relying on a classification model with a focus on labels. This enabled the ReDY program to be flexible about whom it accepted. The admission procedures used are identified in Chapter 3.

Disenfranchised and marginalised. To avoid the implication that students are to be blamed for their lack of success in conventional schools, Te Riele (2012) and others use the term ‘disenfranchised’ to highlight the idea that the causes for the lack of

success are often external to the students. Linked to this is the notion that students can be ‘marginalised’ by a school, that is, if they are not connected to its values and goals they are less likely to be successful in that particular context. Marginalisation is considered to be more a product of issues external to the student than of the internal dispositions of the individual (Lamb, Walstab, Teese, Vickers, & Rumberger, 2004).

College/high school. In Tasmania most government and Catholic schools cater for students from Years 1 to 6 (ages 5–12) in primary school and Years 7 to 10 (ages 13–16) in secondary (high) school. Years 11 and 12 (ages 17–18) are typically educated in a separate senior secondary school (college).

Year/Grade. These terms are used interchangeably in the vernacular of Tasmanian students and teachers to describe a level of schooling. For simplicity I use the term ‘Year’ to denote the level of schooling, and ‘grade’ to represent a mark on an assessment piece. The exception in this thesis is when direct quotations are used from students, where the meaning should be evident from the context.

A note about pseudonyms: to maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms have been used throughout this thesis for all students and staff, as well for the host school. The reengagement program has been relabelled with the acronym ReDY (Reengagement for Disengaged Youth). Real names have been replaced with pseudonyms, even in direct quotes, so that the text reads smoothly.

Purpose of This Research

This study attempts to address the call for more rigorous research on the pedagogy of educating students who are disconnected from school, who attend an alternative program and who then try to reengaged with schooling (Smyth, McInerney, & Fish, 2013). The critical concerns are:

- Do programs like ReDY make a difference?

- Are such programs justifiable, given they are typically more expensive to run than mainstream schooling?
- How do programs such as ReDY influence students in the three domains of cognitive (academic achievement), behaviour, and affective engagement?

It is anticipated that through the examination of a case study of a specific program, the changing nature of students' re-engagement with schooling can be better understood and ascertained.

Context

Students staying engaged and at school until they complete 12 years of schooling is regarded as important for the long-term economic status and wellbeing of the person, as well as for the Australian economy and society as a whole (Council of Australian Government, 2009). In Tasmania, the level of Year 12 completions is below the national average (Cranston et al., 2016). Various Australian and Tasmanian government policy initiatives are in place to try to decrease levels of student disengagement and disconnection from school, and there is recognition of the role that alternative education schools and related programs can play in keeping students in the education system (Lamb, Jackson, Walstab, & Huo, 2015; Mitchell, 2016).

The importance of staying engaged. Li and Lerner (2011) state that students who have disengaged from schooling are more likely to experience academic failure, drop out of school, and psychosocial difficulties. For students, engagement and school 'success' have a reciprocal and cumulative effect on learning. This can be seen through positive academic achievement, greater connectedness with teachers, interest in the curriculum, task behaviour including higher levels of student motivation, and academic self-concept (Wang & Fredricks, 2014).

The evidence of total disengagement is represented by early school leaving, whether the student opts out of school voluntarily or is excluded. This outcome has been shown to lead to a range of poor economic and life outcomes for that individual (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004; Glogowski, 2015; Kennelly & Monrad, 2007; Tilleczek et al., 2011). Over time, early school leavers are also likely to have poorer physical and mental health than their counterparts who stay on to Year 12 (KPMG, 2009). Gibbons (2006) illustrated this by equating an average 45-year-old American who dropped out of school early as having health equivalent to a 65-year-old graduate, with the dropout's life expectancy almost a decade shorter. In the Australian context, it is also likely that early school leavers will be more involved in the juvenile and adult justice system (Kennelly & Monrad, 2007; KPMG, 2009). It is less likely that early school leavers will gain employment; and when they do, they will on average earn lower wages than peers who completed Year 12 (KPMG, 2009; Wilson & Tanner-Smith, 2013). It is important to note, however, that the correlation between a person's poor life outcomes and early school leaving is not necessarily causal: it may be indicative of other factors that have shaped the person's economic opportunities (Lamb et al., 2015).

Studies demonstrate that individual factors are some of the more useful predictors of school completion. These individual factors include

- low school attainment; low school attendance; a negative attitude to schooling and teachers (Kennelly & Monrad, 2007)
- a previous display of behavioural problems at the school (Gutherson, Davies, & Daszkiewicz, 2011; Kennelly & Monrad, 2007; Thomson, 2014)
- ongoing social, emotional or mental health issues (Borrell, 2011; Gutherson et al., 2011)

- high levels of distractibility in the classroom because the schoolwork is either too easy and unchallenging, or too difficult (Gutherson et al., 2011).

The indications are that home and individual life circumstances can also lead to a high risk of students' disengagement from education. Such factors include being a carer for parents or siblings, being a young or prospective parent, being homeless, or being a young offender (Borrell, 2011; Gutherson et al., 2011).

Despite these commonalities of students who disengage, Glogowski (2015) and Tyler and Lofstrom (2009) have argued that the predictive power of any one risk factor is relatively low because of the complex set of relationships between student, family, teachers, school and community. The likelihood of a student leaving school early increases when multiple risk factors combine (Hammond, Linton, Smink, & Drew, 2007; Ingels, Curtin, Kaufman, Alt, & Chen, 2002).

The process of a student considering leaving high school, and then actually leaving, occurs over a period of time with the student often demonstrating increasing levels of disengagement. This can be observed through poorer school attendance, a marked reduction in school achievement, an increase in conduct concerns, and a lack of motivation when at school (Alexander, Entwisle, & Kabbani, 2001; Tillecze et al., 2011; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009). This process of disengaging is often a 'non-linear and fragmented social process' (Tillecze et al., 2011, p. 28) with the student's decision to stay, leave or reengage influenced by a variety of in-school and out-of-school factors and experiences. Educators concerned about students who are at risk of leaving school early and disengaging from learning and school need to consider the reasons behind each particular student's disengagement and put in place some mechanism or program that aims to ameliorate the underlying factors (Cranston et al., 2016).

Australian and Tasmanian context. In 2012 the Australian apparent retention rate from Year 7 to Year 12 was 81.6% (ABS, 2015). This rate is calculated by counting the number of students in school in Year 7 and then recounting them five years later, when they should be in Year 12; the percentage is then calculated (total Year 12 students divided by total Year 7 students, times 100). This 81.6% apparent retention rate is a significant increase in apparent retention rates over previous years: 35% in 1980, 64% in 1990, and 72% in 2000. While retention appears to be improving over time, Tasmania's apparent retention rate decreased in the period 2011–2013. It was the only state to show reduced retention rates during this period and, at 67%, had the lowest rate in the country.

A possible indication of levels of disengagement among Tasmania's secondary students results from their performance on standardised literacy and numeracy tests. Of all Tasmanian Year 9 students in 2014, 8% (compared with 6% nationally) did not meet the national benchmark for reading and 5% (compared with 4% nationally) did not meet the national benchmark for numeracy (DoE Annual report 2013/14, p. 45).

An additional indicator of student disengagement from school is school attendance. As illustrated in Table 1, Tasmanian students in public schools whose attendance rates are below 70% increases from Year 7 (8%) to Year 10 (21%).

Table 1

Attendance rates in Tasmanian public schools by Year level

<u>Per cent attendance thresholds</u>	<u>Student</u>				
	<u>Year 7</u>	<u>Year 8</u>	<u>Year 9</u>	<u>Year 10</u>	<u>All students</u>
At or above 90%	61%	54%	49%	44%	52%
< 90% and > 80%	22%	24%	25%	25%	24%
< 80% and > 70%	8%	8%	10%	10%	9%
Less than 70%	8%	13%	17%	21%	15%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

(Source: Tasmanian Department of Education, Education Performance Services, 2016)

Compared with other Australian states, Tasmania appears to be more disadvantaged on a number of social and economic measures, with the lowest levels of gross state product, wages, productivity, life expectancy, labour force participation, functional literacy, and post-school qualifications (ABS, 2015; Cranston et al., 2016).

Suspensions and exclusions and missing out on schooling. Recent data from the Tasmanian Department of Education indicates that 2842 students (4.5% of the total) had been suspended from government schools, the majority for ‘physical abuse or harassment’ (Paine, 2015, p. 1). AITSL (2013) claims that the number of students not turning up to school is likely to be three times the suspension rate.

A report by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (Mitchell, 2016) was very critical of the use of suspensions and exclusions as a method of dealing with students who were becoming disconnected, and called for a therapeutic rather than a punitive model to respond to the needs of this cohort of vulnerable youth. It is unsurprising that exclusion tactics alone rarely ‘fix’ a young person’s conduct. I contend that young people who have experienced multiple suspensions or been urged to leave their school often have contributory problems such as mental illness, trauma, drug use, family conflict, behavioural issues related to a disability or learning difficulty, or the wish for a different education or training pathway. In such cases, a purely disciplinary response cannot solve the problem.

The risk of being excluded from school is significantly higher for young people who are already facing disadvantage. These include young people in out-of-home care, those with disabilities, Aboriginal young people, and young people living in some (not all) suburbs with high rates of socio-economic disadvantage. Being excluded from school increases the risk that these young people will become even more marginalised. (Mitchell, 2016, p. 8)

Similar Australian findings to those reported by Mitchell (2016) were identified by Lamb et al. (2015) of students who were missing out on schooling. Lamb et al. maintained that students from more disadvantaged backgrounds, such as those from communities with low socio-economic status (SES), were more likely to miss out on actualising their learning potential. Lamb et al. reported that about 26% of young people in Australia did not attain a Year 12 or Certificate III equivalent by age 19, that Year 12 attainment among 19-year-olds varied substantially according to socio-economic background, and that about 40% of young Australians from the lowest SES backgrounds did not complete Year 12 or its equivalent by age 19.

Alternative education in Australia and Tasmania. There are a significant number of alternative programs in Australia, and the range of program types, student cohorts, and teaching strategies is highly varied (Te Riele, 2014). Te Riele noted from her research that of 900 programs which service over 70 000 students, 97% catered directly for young people at risk of non-completion and for early school leavers. The 70 000 students equates to 7% of the total number of Australian students in the 15 to 19 year age group.

In 2015 the Learning Choices Program Database listed 31 programs in Tasmania catering for 9- to 15-year-old students, and nine for 11- to 14-year-old students (Learning Choices Program Database, 2015). Because of the number and the diversity of alternative programs, the core purpose of this research is to focus in depth on one program using a case study research model, rather than to skim the surface of a number of different programs.

Case Study Research

Studying a single alternative program in detail will provide what Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2008) described as ‘a unique example of real people in real situations’ (p.

253). In case study research, the unit of analysis can vary in size and purpose, but is definable by a common characteristic (Swanborn, 2010). The case study unit is defined within specific boundaries which allow the phenomenon to be identified (Ary, Jacobs, Sorenson & Walker, 2013). The ‘boundaries’ of the case in this study are students and staff involved in the ReDY program over the period 2010–2014. In accordance with observations by Swanborn (2010), this research, like other case studies, includes the researcher as both participant and observer and uses a variety of data sources including documents, interviews and observations.

This study can be categorised as an ‘instrumental case study’ (Ary, Jacobs, Sorenson, Walker, 2013, p. 486), in which the findings aim to provide some insight into the issues of engagement and alternative education generally. Ary et al. explain that analysis in case study research can be either holistic or, as is the situation in this research, embedded, with the focus on specific elements. Conflicting interpretations of events and different perspectives from different stakeholders who have specific roles and experiences within that unit of analysis are common characteristics of case study research (Swanborn (2010).

Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective of this research is drawn from two approaches to dealing with students at risk of disengagement. The first emanates from researchers in critical pedagogy such as Paulo Freire (1972) and his focus on empowering the disenfranchised. From this perspective, writers such as Smyth (2012) and Zyngier (2011) examined the role of alternative education as a way of empowering disenfranchised youth and of challenging the dominant discourse of mainstream education and society. Smyth et al. (2013) proposed that alternative education can provide a pedagogy that challenges the deficit views placed upon students who are

disadvantaged, and that through an education that is more connected to their needs, students can gain access to long-term opportunities. In part the argument is that education and schooling are a form of social control that reflects the values and needs of the people and agencies in power; as a consequence, students who do not share the values, advantages, and resources of those in power are disenfranchised (Freire, 1972). That is, the student has to fit into the education and the schooling and its associated discourse and adopt the values, content and delivery methods provided, rather than receive an education and schooling designed to fit their needs (Smyth et al. (2013).

The second theoretical perspective based on a humanistic psychological perspective such as that originally articulated by Carl Rogers (1963) and a positive psychological perspective (Henderson & McClinton, 2016). Both these perspectives adopt a 'whole of person' approach and focus on understanding how best to promote human potential and develop peoples' wellbeing through counselling and other interventions (Waterman, 2013). In particular, positive psychologists such as Proctor et al. (2011) and Seligman et al. (2005) placed importance on individuals: having agency over their behaviour; developing a positive self-identity; developing greater emotional and cognitive autonomy; operating effectively in an authentic social environmental context; and using their cognition and reasoning to makes choices and to engage in decision-making. From this perspective, how and why students operate at the cognitive, behavioural and the emotional/affective levels are important and relevant perspectives to apply when working with the cognitive and social-emotional development of youth (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Proctor et al., 2011), and in particular with youth who are at risk of school failure and dropping out (Edwards, Mumford, & Serra-Roldan, 2007; Henderson & McClinton, 2016).

The importance of non-cognitive factors influencing the cognitive development of students, particularly for those students likely to disengage with learning and drop out of school, has been articulated by Farrington et al. (2012). They suggest that an effective strategy to improve students' success in school and their likelihood of completing and not leaving school early was to support the development of their academic mindsets and self-perceptions in relation to their academic work. The evidence is that students with positive dispositions towards learning and school are more motivated to work harder, engage in more productive way with academic tasks, and show more persistence and try to overcome school and social obstacles to their academic success (Farrington et al., 2012). Changing students' negative or ineffective mindsets to schooling and learning is not a simple process and requires time, relevant experiences, and the learning of new strategies that enable students to 're-program' their academic self-concept, self-efficacy, and self-confidence as well as to acquire relevant academic skills (Proctor et al., 2011; Seligman et al., 2005).

The idea that alternative education provisions can provide a place for students to 'escape from' the negativity of mainstream education is supported by authors such as Archambault et al. (2009), Fredricks et al. (2004) and Mitchell (2016). This has led to a body of literature examining the features of programs which specifically cater for the holistic needs of youth, who are often disadvantaged, disenfranchised, and marginalised (Edwards et al., 2007; Lamb et al., 2015; Mitchell, 2016) and understanding why these students become disengaged and what are the most effective ways to reconnect these students back into education (Cranston et al., 2016). Embedded in the philosophy of many alternative education programs for disengaged students are: aspects of students' rights and responsibilities; student empowerment and agency; emotional support; a

relevant and meaningful curriculum; decision-making; mentoring; and advocacy (Edwards et al., 2007; Proctor et al., 2011; Smyth et al. (2013).

Description of the alternative program under investigation. The focus of this case study was the Reengagement for Disengaged Youth (ReDY) Program which was established in 2010 as an annex to a medium sized ‘host’ school catering for students from Kindergarten to Year 10 (ages 5-15). The new principal of the host school identified a critical need to address student disengagement, poor conduct and absenteeism. Her solution, in part, was the development of the ReDY program, which aimed to be a place for the students most at risk of disengagement and early school leaving.

ReDY employed three full time staff: a senior and a junior teacher and a social educator; it enrolled between 8 and 12 students at any one time. There were no specific periods of enrolment, and students could join at any time deemed appropriate if a space was available. The students, identified as at risk by teachers in the host school, were invited to participate in ReDY. A requirement of enrolment was that each student must choose to enter the program. The ReDY program ran from 9 am until 3 pm from Monday through Thursday, and from 9 am until 12.30 pm on Friday. Within ReDY heavy emphasis was placed on literacy and numeracy, as well on providing engaging, practical learning experiences. Regular one-on-one sessions were held to help students with their individual progress. At entry to ReDY, students identified the goals that they thought they would like to achieve to make their lives more positive. These goals formed the basis of each student’s individual learning plan, and were used to measure progress and success through regular self-assessments.

Students would leave the program in one of three ways. Some decided that they did not want to continue the program and withdrew voluntarily, and this usually

happened in the first four weeks after entry. Other students were ‘sent home’ in situations where the staff felt that their actions did not demonstrate that they were working on their goals. Most students who were sent home re-entered the program and went on to complete it successfully, but some never returned and often ‘dropped off the radar’. The other way that students left the program was that they completed their goals and transitioned either to the mainstream campus or to another school. On average, students stayed in the ReDY program for around 12 months.

Ethical issues in conducting this study. A major consideration in gaining consent for this project is that I, as the researcher, was also a teacher in the ReDY program and had worked with most of the participants. The National Statement on Human Research requires that participants should not experience any overt pressure or coercion to participate in research (NHMRC, 2007, 2.2.9), and were able to give informed and voluntary consent. Every effort to ensure this was made. It is possible that a claim could be made that I, as the researcher, was too close to the study and the participants. The reason I placed myself in the researcher position was because I had established a working relationship with the young people, and there was concern that the students were less likely to talk about the program with a stranger. Several things minimised the possibility of student coercion:

- I no longer had any influence at the ReDY program or the Host School, having ceased working there in 2012 and started this study in 2013.
- The initial contact with the students who had left the host school was done electronically through an advertisement on Facebook. This allowed the ex-students to refuse participation without having to address me in person.

- For students still enrolled at the school, a teacher from the school (who did not teach the students) addressed the students and asked whether they wished to participate.

Recruitment and consent considerations. Because the students in alternative programs are often identified as a vulnerable cohort of students (Edwards et al., 2007; Lamb et al., 2015; Mitchell, 2016), it is important to identify the procedures used in this case study research to ‘protect’ the rights of participating students. To minimise the possibility of participants feeling pressured to take part, the participants were approached indirectly, either through their schools or online through Facebook.

To participate in this research, students needed to provide consent that was both voluntary and informed, as per the ethical requirements for social science research (NHMRC, 2007, 4.2.7bii). In addition, their parents/guardians also needed to provide informed consent (NHMRC, 2007, 4.2.7bii) if their children were to participate. In this research students’ academic performance information was only accessed upon receipt of both individual and parental consent. Prospective interviewees were given an information sheet about the study prior to the interview, and they had an opportunity to ask questions prior to consenting. They were made aware that they might withdraw from the study at any time without explanation (NHMRC, 2007, 2.2.19).

Program staff who were interviewed as part of the evaluation of the ReDY program were informed that their responses would not be shared with their colleagues. Pseudonyms were assigned in the data analysis and report writing phases of this study. As part of the requirements for ethics approval, students remained anonymous throughout the first two stages of data collection (school data and survey). At the completion of the survey, they were asked whether they wished to be contacted for any further involvement in the study. If they voluntarily provided their name and contact

details, students were contacted and asked to participate in the interview. As part of their consent for the interview, they could choose to have their school data and survey results re-identified. All data, including the school data, transcripts and questionnaires, was de-identified before any dissemination of results and for storage.

Research Questions

- To what extent, and in what ways, was the Reengagement for Disengaged Youth (ReDY) program effective?
- For participating students, did this effectiveness extend across the cognitive, behavioural and affective dimensions of engagement?

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is in five chapters; the contents of each chapter are briefly outlined below.

Chapter 1 provides a brief description of the state and national context of programs for disengaged students. It introduces the characteristics of case study research, critical pedagogy and positive psychology, and states the research question.

Chapter 2 positions this study in the context of national and international research into engagement, alternative education and students involved in alternative education.

Chapter 3 describes how the qualitative and quantitative data were gathered from six sources and analysed according to an appropriate framework.

Chapter 4 presents both the quantitative and qualitative findings from the research.

Chapter Five reviews the findings in light of Chapter 2's discussion of the literature on engagement and alternative education, and concludes by identifying the limitations and future of this research and its implications for practice.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to address the two research questions that frame this study, literature from a range of sources was reviewed both to contextualise the study and to inform its direction and scope. To answer the first research question, ‘To what extent, and in what ways was, the Reengagement for Disengaged Youth (ReDY) program effective?’, two key components needed to be explored: the first the concept of reengagement itself, as the aim or ultimate measure of ReDY’s effectiveness, and the second an investigation of effective practices in alternative education programs.

The second question, ‘For participating students, did this effectiveness extend across the cognitive, behavioural and affective dimensions of engagement?’, required an in-depth review of the three dimensions of engagement, and of the factors that influence the disengagement or reengagement of students.

This chapter is organised into two sections. Section 1 reviews the literature on engagement, and Section 2 investigates alternative education.

Section 1: Engagement

Engagement is used as the central theoretical concept in this study which focuses on the experiences of students who enrolled in an alternative program designed for reengagement with and reintegration into mainstream education. Despite engagement being a key concept in discussions of school achievement and retention in recent decades, its meaning is rarely discussed philosophically, which has led to its becoming a somewhat ‘empty superficial ... slogan’ (McMahon & Portelli, 2004, p. 60). When it has been discussed, it is considered problematic and is accompanied by disagreement (Harris, 2008). Part of the reason for this lack of clarity may be because student engagement and disengagement from school are difficult to define operationally (McMahon & Zyngier, 2009). One of the aims of this literature review is to investigate

the theoretical construct of engagement, to define it so it can be applied in the context of alternative education programs designed to work with students who are showing signs of disengagement in their schooling.

Zyngier (2008) noted that the link between student engagement and student learning has been a core issue in education, and has been addressed by seminal writers such as Dewey (1916) and Freire (1972). It has been described by different authors as ‘school bonding’ and ‘connectedness’ (Eggert, Thompson, Herting, & Nicholas, 1994), ‘attachment’ (Gottfredson, Fink, & Graham, 1994), ‘belongingness’ (OECD, 2003), ‘involvement’ (Caspi, Wright, Moffitt, & Silva, 1998; Finn, 1989), and ‘commitment’ (Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice, & Tremblay, 1997). Wang and Fredricks (2014) claimed that the theoretical constructs of student engagement in schooling have, in part, their foundations in social control theory (Hirschi, 1969) and self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Because students’ behaviours and actions need to be understood in context, their engagement with learning has also been influenced by what is known as Bronfenbrenner (1992) ecological theory. Ecological theory suggests that human development and behaviours stem from complex and dynamic interactional processes that involve significant others and the wider social network, and that the individual is embedded within that network. Understanding student engagement is currently linked with the discussion of ‘dropout prevention’ and the need to understand attachment and belonging at the individual student level better (Appleton, Christenson, Kim, & Reschly, 2006; Archambault et al., 2009; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). School data and student achievement and performance data (Archambault et al., 2009; McMahon & Zyngier, 2009) also link engagement to participation. Student engagement is thus considered a key concept in schooling, and an important agent in cumulative learning,

educational achievement and eventual long term success of the individual (Finn, 1993; Wang & Fredricks, 2014).

To advance any discussion on the processes of student disengagement and reengagement, a thorough understanding of the theoretical constructs of engagement must first be examined. Three core assumptions of engagement emerge from the literature: that engagement is a relationship, a process, and multidimensional. These assumptions will be explored below.

Student engagement is a relationship. McMahon and Portelli (2004) identified and critiqued two main discourses of engagement, the ‘conservative’ and the ‘liberal’, and suggested a third discourse that they called ‘critical democratic engagement’. They claimed that the conservative view of engagement focused on procedural aspects and does not try to address the values and aims of engagement from the students’ perspectives. It places most of the responsibility for engagement on the teachers’ skills and practices. From this perspective, disengagement from schooling is due to the deficits of the students, and effective engagement is due to the skills of the teacher (Zyngier, 2008). The conservative view of engagement is concerned with the students’ external and observable behaviours in the classroom or school setting (McMahon & Portelli, 2004, p. 60). This perspective is common in educational practice and policy around disengagement (Zyngier, 2008).

The liberal conception of engagement recognises the students’ cognitive and reasoning (Zyngier, 2008). It emphasises the importance of a student’s sense of connectedness with schooling (Smith et al., 1998). The responsibility for connectedness is shared by the students and others in the school, including teachers and school leaders and administrators. McMahon and Portelli (2004) argued that although the liberal view is more student focused than the conservative perspective of student engagement,

engagement still is something that is ‘controlled’ by teachers and occurs in a cause-and-effect, mechanistic, relationship. The claim is that when teachers undertake particular practices, or exhibit particular dispositions, student engagement increases (McMahon & Portelli, 2004). While the liberal conception includes student voice as a way of measuring engagement, students themselves are minor parties to the engagement process itself, with engagement being something that is ‘done’ to the students.

The third perspective of students’ engagement is what McMahon and Portelli (2004) call the ‘critical democratic engagement’ perspective. In this model the student and the teachers have an element of shared control and the voice of the student is listened to and acted upon by the teachers and the school leaders.

McMahon and Portelli argued for this third approach because it recognised engagement as a multifaceted phenomenon:

Engagement is present in the iterations that emerge as a result of the dialectical processes between teachers and students and the differing patterns that evolve out of transformational actions and interactions. As enacted, engagement is generated through the interactions of students and teachers, in a shared space. (McMahon & Portelli, 2004, p. 70)

The ‘critical’ component of the McMahon and Portelli (2004) model, which insists that engagement must ‘involve addressing substantive issues ... of social justice’, explains engagement as a relationship between students and their schooling. This notion is integral to my approach to engagement. The claim is that when engagement is perceived as the outcome of the social, academic, and emotional relationship between students and teachers it helps to remove the ‘blame for disengagement’ from either party—or, more accurately, shares the responsibility (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012; Fredricks, 2014; Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989; Zyngier,

2008). As noted by Christenson et al. (2012), engagement is highly influenced by student, teacher, and classroom contextual factors, which differ for each student, teacher, and classroom. Student engagement with learning is more likely to occur when classroom pedagogies and students' learning needs align: a complex and dynamic interaction (Callingham, 2013, p. 2; Smyth & Hattam, 2004). The notion that student engagement is complex and needs to be seen as multidimensional and dynamic is a core construct in the contemporary student engagement literature (Callingham, 2013; Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012; Zyngier, 2008).

Student Engagement is a Process.

Central to understanding how students disengage and reengage with their schooling is the notion that the level of student engagement with schooling is not fixed, but is malleable and can change over time (Callingham, 2013; Christenson et al., 2012; Fredricks, 2014). On this point Finn (1993) argued that student engagement needs to be considered as a developmental process that is shaped and formed over time by the cumulative experiences that the student has with teachers and others in the school and home environments.

The idea of engagement as a process that happens over time is supported by a number of researchers (Christenson et al., 2012; Tilleczeck et al., 2011; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009; Wang & Fredricks, 2014), as is the idea that disconnection from school is often the final stage in the dynamic and cumulative process of disengagement (Finn, 1989; Rumberger & Larson, 1998, p. 5).

The conceptualisation of student engagement as both a relationship and a process (Fredricks, 2014) has three direct implications for better understanding student disengagement and reengagement. First, student engagement is malleable and changing; the context can change the level of engagement. The implications of this malleability is

that interventions designed to improve students' engagement with learning are possible, and that negative student engagement and behaviour can change over time (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012; Tilleczek et al., 2011; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). Any single point measure of 'engagement', from a malleability perspective is just one measure and by changing the context, student engagement levels can also change. The second implication is that student disengagement and reengagement with school and teachers requires action, and some restoration of the connectedness between the student and the learning and teaching (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012; Tilleczek et al., 2011). Disengagement, as Archambault et al. (2009) noted was the weakening of the relationship between the student and school. Reengagement, therefore, is the strengthening of the relationship between the student and school.

The third implication is that when student engagement is understood as a cumulative relationship between teachers and the student, the further the relationship erodes the greater are the resources and effort required to re-establish a positive relationship between the individual student and educators (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012, p. 4). This notion that student engagement is related to connectedness between the student and educators is outlined in Figure 1 below:

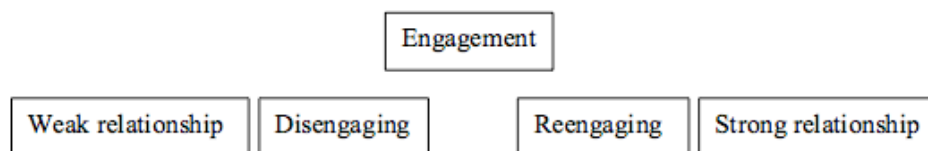


Figure 1 Student engagement as a process and a relationship with school and teachers

Student Engagement is Multidimensional.

As well as being a relationship and a malleable process, many researchers have suggested, student engagement needs to be understood as a complex interrelationship of three dimensions: cognitive factors, affective factors, and behavioural factors (Appleton et al., 2006; Archambault et al., 2009; Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012; Fredricks et al., 2004; Li & Lerner, 2013; Stefansson, Gestsdottir, Geldhof, Skulason, & Lerner, 2015). The notion that student engagement can be understood from a cognitive, affective or behavioural perspective recognises that it is a multidimensional construct (Christenson et al., 2012). The claim is that when evaluating the effectiveness of an intervention program associated with students who are at risk of disengagement, all three dimensions, cognitive, affective and behavioural, need to be considered (Archambault et al., 2009; Harris, 2008; Tilleczeck et al., 2011). Harris (2008), in her study of teachers' conceptions of student engagement, also made the point that while the multidimensional view of engagement is accepted, many studies only focus on academic reengagement. Similarly, Wang and Fredricks (2014) stated that

most existing research has failed to capture the multifaceted and interactive nature of school engagement ... Research investigating the differential potential of the three engagement types to function as precursors for youth problem behaviour is particularly sparse ... even fewer studies have used longitudinal data to explore how school engagement and problem behaviour reciprocally influence each other in ways that lead to dropping out of school. (p. 723)

Although different researchers have included variations of each of these dimensions, broadly speaking the 'cognitive' dimension refers to the way in which students engage with their learning, the 'affective' dimension refers to students' feelings and attitudes towards school, and the 'behavioural' dimension refers to how students act

towards school. This multidimensional model has been used both in theoretical constructs and as a framework for professional reports such as the KPMG (2009) report produced for the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. The three dimensions of cognitive, affective and behavioural engagement and the related topics of disengagement and re-engagement will be reviewed in the following sections.

Cognitive Engagement

Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, and Fernandez (1989) introduced the concept of educational engagement. They defined this aspect of engagement as comprising student effort and academic success. In this sense, cognitive engagement is a person's self-perception of their cognitive ability and their effort in schooling. It is linked to their affective and behavioural dimensions of engagement, but is focused on trying to understand the reasoning and thinking associated with student feelings and actions (Christenson et al., 2012; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992).

Archambault et al. (2009) describes this element of engagement as having two main axes: the students' investment in learning, and the students' use of self-regulation strategies; the students' level of intrinsic motivation for learning is included in this category (KPMG, 2009). From a cognitive perspective, the main elements under consideration are the students' perceptions of their competency, their willingness to engage, their ability to self-regulate their behaviour, and their establishment of task-oriented goals (Archambault et al., 2009).

Students' perception of competency acts as an indication of cognitive engagement. Developmentally, adolescents' self-worth is increasingly dependent on their ability to achieve academically as they progress from primary to high school (Mahatmya, Lohman, Matjasko, & Farb, 2012). Individuals form their perception of

their cognitive ability from feedback they receive over time (Hay & Ashman, 2003).

This can come from teachers' comments, academic performance feedback, home and parental feedback, and the students' own perceptions of their competencies from their frame of reference and peer group (Hattie, 2013).

The concern in high schools is that the increased emphasis on competitive achievement may, in part, lead to an increase in negative feedback on a student's in-class performance in comparison to others in the class. This indirectly decreases intrinsic motivation to engage with learning (Lepper, Corpus, & Iyengar, 2005). Students' perception of their competency in school and their motivation to engage with school is also influenced by their perceived level of support and enthusiasm for learning from their school (Hattie, 2013; Patrick, Hisley, & Kempler, 2000), their home environments (Steinberg et al., 1992), and their peers (Irwin, 2013; Ryan & Patrick, 2001).

Fredricks et al. (2004) have claimed that students' perceptions of their cognitive ability and of the likelihood that their efforts will result in a positive outcome both influence their level of goal setting. Students who have low perceptions of their competency in school and who believe that, even if they try, the outcome is uncertain, are more likely to set low goals for their learning (Appleton et al., 2006; Cocks & Watt, 2004).

School factors. Understanding the factors that promote disengagement from learning has been a consistent topic in education for many years (Thomson, 2014). On this point Thomson (2014) concluded that students on the edge of formal schooling and beginning to disengage with schooling consistently report that the curriculum they were following in school was not relevant and that they were bored with the presentation of content and with the classroom.

Newman (1998) identified five characteristics of schools that increased students' level of engagement: voluntary choice in selecting subjects; clear and consistent learning goals; smaller class size; student participation in the learning activity; and the creation of academic work that was meaningful to the students. Fredricks et al. (2004) asserted that the learning climate within the classroom was also important and that students were more engaged with learning if they were surrounded by highly engaged peers who actively discussed ideas, debated, and critiqued each other's work. The authors also highlighted that peers and the classroom's social environment were important considerations when investigating students' engagement and disengagement with learning.

Family and community factors.

The level of poverty in the home (Aron, 2003a), and the socio-economic status (SES) of the family represented by home education and educational levels of the parents (Looker & Thiessen, 2008) are considered to influence students' level of engagement. Low family SES is the most commonly reported characteristic of students who disengage from school (Glogowski, 2015; Gutherson et al., 2011; Thomson, 2014), identified by measuring the SES of the community in which the student's home is located (Bouhours & Bryer, 2005) and by the parental income level (Looker & Thiessen, 2008). In an Australian study, McGregor and Mills (2012) maintained that many of the other risk factors for students' disengagement from school, such as low academic performance, school location, gender, aboriginality, and the ethnic composition of the students, were all linked to higher levels of poverty in the home. The authors cited Australian Government statistics that only 59% of students from low socio-economic backgrounds finish year 12 in Australia, as opposed to the average of 75% of all students.

Individual factors. In Australia, the evidence is that students who are referred to and enrol in alternative educational settings typically have lower academic achievement than peers who are not referred to alternative programs (Thomson, 2014). Borrell (2011) noted that learning difficulties, low numeracy, low literacy and poor school achievement were common characteristics for students who enrolled in Pavilion School in Melbourne, which is an alternative school. Although the majority of Australian schools have systems and services for assisting students with literacy and numeracy needs, Gilmore and Boulton-Lewis (2009) maintained that many students with learning difficulties were undiagnosed and thus often incorrectly labelled ‘lazy’ by parents and teachers. This has the effect of blaming the victim rather than recognising that the schooling system has failed the student by failing to meet that student’s learning and wellbeing needs (Gilmore & Boulton-Lewis, 2009).

In terms of students who are typically referred to alternative educational programs in the United States, Becker (2010) noted that only 12% of the alternative education population was identified as having learning disabilities and the majority had become disengaged from schooling for a myriad of other reasons. This finding was echoed by a large statistical analysis of the US data which stated that the percentage of students with a disability who attended alternative schools was roughly the same percentage as those in the mainstream public schools (Kleiner, Porch, & Farris, 2002). This suggests that students in the United States are referred to alternative programs on a range of criteria, and as a consequence are a heterogeneous cohort. A similar finding has been noted by McGregor and Mills (2012), writing on the Australian alternative educational program context.

Affective Engagement

Affective engagement refers to the students' 'feelings, interests, perceptions and attitudes toward school' (Archambault et al., 2009, p. 654). Students' attitudes towards school were described by Rumberger and Larson (1998) as a major component of academic engagement. The sense of psychological and social belonging has been described as attachment, affiliation, connectedness, and bonding (KPMG, 2009). Fredricks et al. (2004) maintained that students can form this attachment to school if they enjoy school, are interested in schoolwork, have a sense of belonging in the school setting, value education, and see schooling as a way to achieve their long-term goals. The problem is that this attachment to school tends to decline when students reach adolescence (Christenson, 2012).

One of the important characteristics of students' affective engagement with schooling is their enjoyment of school, which is also influenced by the students' level of peer support in the school environment (Iachini, Buettner, Anderson-Butcher, & Reno, 2013). In addition, fear of academic failure within the classroom has been reported to significantly impact on students' engagement and academic performance (Caraway, Tucker, Reinke, & Hall, 2003).

Perceptions of how interesting their schoolwork is also influences student connectedness with schooling (Fredricks et al., 2004). Fredricks et al. (2004) argued that connectedness with schooling is weaker when the teachers do not show care towards the students, when the students perceived the curriculum as boring, and when the content is delivered unenthusiastically by uninterested teachers. Conversely, the more inspiring teachers who deliver the curriculum in a way that is tailored to capture students' interest in the content and who are more able to communicate their caring to the students help to connect students with their schooling (Patrick, et al., 2000).

Goodenow and Grady (1993) noted that the students' sense of school belonging is an integral component of their engagement. On this point, McNeely, Nonnemaker, and Blum (2002) found that students who had higher levels of school connectedness had higher grades and less truancy. Students who reported having higher levels of connectedness often went to smaller schools, or to schools that use fewer punitive disciplinary measures (Christenson et al., 2012). Students' level of valuing education and connectedness to the school are two affective dimensions that influence levels of engagement with schooling (Martin, 2008; Smyth et al., 2013).

School factors. Thompson (2013) argued that too often students' disengagement from schooling is associated with their being bullied and a perceived lack of support from the school. Positive peer acceptance has been associated with higher levels of school satisfaction, and with social, behavioural and academic effort (Berndt & Keefe, 1995 in Fredricks et al., 2004). Ladd, Buhs and Seid (2000) noted that disengagement was associated with poorer levels of in-class behaviour and conduct, lower participation in classroom interactions, less interest in content, and fewer friends in the school. Peer influence on a student's enjoyment of school was also noted in HDRC (2000) with the observation that peers can have both a positive and a negative impact on school dropout (Looker & Thiessen, 2008; Solomon & Rogers, 2001). A study in New Zealand by Irwin (2013) found that 'hanging out with mates' was a crucial reason for male students to attend school. This social reason for attendance improved the students' level of retention, increased their level of academic achievement, and reduced the level of stress associated with schooling. Thus good peer relations was a protective factor that assisted the students with their engagement with schooling (Irwin, 2013).

Individual factors. Many student-level factors influence engagement with schooling. Gable, Bullock, and Evans (2006) reported that 60% of early school leavers

often suffered emotional and wellbeing problems. Mental and emotional health, along with drug and alcohol issues, are commonly seen as characteristics of youth who disengage with their schooling (Borrell, 2011). However, Cox (2010) in her Australian research into the NETschool in Bendigo, Victoria reported that although the perception of poor mental health was higher for participants in the NETschool alternative education program, it was not demonstrated that students in her study had higher mental or emotional health needs than other Year 11 students in Victoria.

Reasons for student disengagement have been reported to differ according to gender, with girls more likely to disengage for social reasons, such as not getting along with their peers or the teachers or becoming pregnant (Kelly, 1993). In contrast, boys were twice as likely to leave school early as girls, and were more likely to be identified as ‘at risk’ for leaving for behavioural and academic reasons (Gutherson et al., 2011; Thomson, 2014).

Behavioural Engagement

Behavioural engagement can be determined by the way students act towards others in the school environment and how they display their actions (Fredricks, 2014). Finn (1989) identified four distinct characteristics of behavioural engagement: responsiveness to requirements; participation in class-related initiatives; participation in extracurricular activities; and decision-making. In addition, Rumberger and Larson (1998) defined students’ ‘social engagement’ in terms of level of class attendance, level of compliance with rules, and level of active participation in the classroom program and school activities. Actions such as participation and homework completion have also been described as procedural engagement (Wang & Fredricks, 2014). Archambault et al. (2009, p. 654) suggested that students’ behaviour could be divided along three main axes: positive behaviour; involvement in school-related tasks; and participation in extra-

curricular activities. These researchers noted that in terms of classroom behaviour four are the most commonly noted by teachers: the students' level of conduct and compliance in the classroom; the students' level of school attendance; the students' level of participation in the classroom; and the extent to which the students complete set homework tasks.

Christenson et al. (2012) have suggested that teachers' reports of their students are overly focused on outward displays of negative student behaviour, particularly of disruptive behaviour in the classroom. Students who display withdrawn behaviours or who are uncommunicative in the classroom are rarely reported for poor behaviour. In terms of academic achievement, Wentzel (1993) reported a statistically significant difference between students who demonstrated more pro-social behaviours (e.g., sharing, cooperating with teachers and others), than those who demonstrated more anti-social behaviours (e.g., breaking rules, being non-compliant). Those displaying more anti-social behaviours had poorer levels of academic achievement than those displaying more pro-social behaviours.

Attendance simply and powerfully illustrates engagement in the behavioural dimension. If a student and the school (staff and students) have a poor relationship, then there is little incentive for either to spend time together. Schools demonstrate this through formal exclusions, suspensions and expulsions that keep students away. Students demonstrate this through truancy, skipping classes and lack of punctuality. The majority of research in the area of behavioural engagement has focused on truancy and dropout (Christenson et al., 2012) Studies investigating this element of engagement have used official school attendance records, but there are many factors that affect a student's attendance. Klem and Connell (2004) found that school attendance was higher when teachers created well-structured environments and were caring towards the

students. Finn and Zimmer (Christenson et al., 2012) argued that the link between attendance and achievement is obvious, and can be explained clearly as lost teaching time resulting in lost opportunities for learning. One study differentiated between explained and unexplained (excused and unexcused) absences and found that while both were correlated with lower achievement, unexplained absences were more detrimental (Gottfried, 2009). Recent studies from the United States have shown a much higher rate of drop-out and non-promotion to the next year level associated with high absenteeism, with Gottfried (2014) demonstrating that for every 1% increase in school attendance, the chance of a Year Eight student progressing to Year Nine increased by 5%. Students' level of participation in class and the level of time on task are also seen as elements that demonstrate the level of behavioural engagement (Wang & Fredricks, 2014).

Although some researchers have measured engagement as time spent on completing set tasks (for example, Greenwood, Horton, & Utley, 2002), homework completion is also regarded as a sound indicator of the relationship between teachers and their students (Fredricks, 2014). Additionally, the extent to which students complete homework is, in part, an indication of the level of family support received. Students who complete homework with the assistance of their parents achieve higher academically and demonstrate higher levels of engagement with school (Leone & Richards, 1989; Shumow & Miller, 2001) and with their peers (Steinberg et al., 1996).

School factors. Students attending alternative programs perceived that discipline practices in their mainstream school were unfair (Thomson, 2014). Te Riele (2006) noted that students who had moved out of mainstream schools often stated that the actions of the school played a part in their departure. There was a perception by these students that they were pushed out, rather than that they had chosen to leave. McGregor and Mills (2012) suggested that the rigidity of secondary schools in relation to rules,

uniform and curriculum arrangement fail to recognise the cumulative effects of a student's life circumstances such as poverty or family breakdown. This is especially true for students who live in unstable or neglectful environments who, because of a lack of resources and support, may find it difficult to comply with the expectations of middle-class schools (Francis & Mills, 2012).

Fredricks et al. (2004) examined studies which investigated the manner in which school's disciplinary practices influenced students' level of disengagement. They argued that although fairness and flexibility in school rules are often assumed to reduce disengagement (Finn & Voelkl, 1993; Natriello, 1984), the evidence is mixed. Some studies showed that inflexibility and lack of fairness by teachers increased levels of student disengagement (Finn & Voelkl, 1993; Natriello, 1984), whereas higher levels of rigidity of school and classroom rules and accountability of behaviour were associated with a decrease in students' level of disengagement (Bryk & Thum, 1989; McDill, Natriello, & Pallas, 1986).

The process of a student disengaging in the behavioural dimension appears to be influenced by the teachers' interactions with the student. Te Riele (2006) reported that teachers are more likely to be prejudicial towards misbehaving students than compliant students. The claim is that the initial level of student behavioural engagement with the teacher influences the relationship the student has with the teacher; in turn, the relationship impacts on the student's level of engagement (Ladd et al., 1999). This suggests that some students find themselves in a cycle where their disengagement from school is, in part, deepened by the teacher's response to them, which in turn deepens their level of disengagement. Teacher support and caring for students has been correlated with higher levels of student behavioural engagement, less disruptive

behaviour in the classroom, and a lower probability of the student dropping out of school (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Family and community factors. Physically getting to school can be difficult for students living in rural communities or where there is poor public transport, but psychologically not wanting to go to school is the more likely ‘cause’ of students’ non-attendance (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). On this point, McGregor and Mills (2012) suggested that marginalisation of a student by the school and teachers can influence the student’s level of attendance. This marginalisation is increased if the students are of aboriginal descent or are recent migrants with limited English.

Individual factors. Looker and Thiessen (2008) in their review of ‘second chance’ programs for disengaged students in Canada noted that males have a higher dropout rate than females, and often boys had different reasons for disengaging with school than girls. Murphy and MacLean (2006) in their study of the alternative education program in Melbourne suggested that school staff often interpreted boys’ disruptive behaviour as more of a problem than girls’ disruptive behaviour.

Peer pressure can be another influence associated with student disengagement. The indications are that students with similar levels of engagement with school tend to cluster together in their peer group, which helps to reinforce and normalise the level of school engagement (Kindermann, 1993).

The individual characteristics and home circumstances of students can have major influences on their level of engagement in a school. Students who had become disengaged from the mainstream education process in Queensland were tracked by Bouhours and Bryer (2005), who found that this group had experienced higher levels of child abuse and had more chronic health problems and higher rates of foster care arrangements than students who were more engaged with schooling.

Interconnectedness of Engagement Dimensions

Current literature on engagement suggests that individual dimensions and their manifestations cannot exist in isolation (Fredricks, 2014; Harris, 2008). Although reducing the complexity of student engagement into smaller parts can increase a conceptual understanding of the concept, descriptions of any one aspect of engagement by itself only represent a partial understanding of the complex and often changing relationship that exists between students and their schools. Student disengagement is both a psychological state and a behaviour (Archambault et al., 2009; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). For example, students can appear to be on task in the classroom but not actually engage in learning, merely displaying the behaviours associated with in-classroom compliance (Harris, 2008). Similarly, students who may display lower levels of motivation towards school than their peers may still complete school because of a range of home, peer and school factors (Janosz, Le Blanc, Boulerice, & Tremblay, 2000). Skinner and Belmont (1993) recognised that students whose social engagement with peers and some aspects of school life manifests as an enjoyment of school do not necessarily engage cognitively with the curriculum. Even so, Archambault et al. (2009) argued that the level of behavioural engagement with schooling is still one of the best predictors of eventual early school dropout. Harris (2008), on the other hand, argued that students' level of cognitive engagement was most strongly linked to successful academic outcomes and school engagement, and students' level of behavioural and affective engagement influenced their academic performance. Importantly, Harris (2008) called for more research into the interrelationships between the three main student dimensions of engagement, cognitive, affective and behavioural.

Section 2: Alternative Education

In the Australian educational context, students who are legally required to be at school because of their age but who have been identified as being at risk of failing in the mainstream context, or have been formally excluded from school, may be offered the opportunity to participate in alternative education programs and schools (Borrell, 2011; Gilmore & Boulton-Lewis, 2009). The term ‘alternative education’ is, however, very broad and does not represent a commonly agreed set of criteria (Thomson & Pennacchia, 2015). The claim is that the term ‘alternative education’ has become confusing and even misleading (Te Riele, 2008).

Aron (2003b) argued that the effectiveness of alternative programs for disengaged students is still an issue of educational debate. The hypothesis is that there is still a lack of evidence of effective practice in reengagement programs and even uncertainty about how to evaluate such programs, given the diversity of students who are involved (Cox, Davidson, & Bynum, 1995; Gutherson et al., 2011).

A Brief History of Alternative Education

The development of alternative education schools and programs in Europe and North America can be traced to the work of educational philosophers and practitioners such as Dewey (1916), Steiner (1907), Montessori (1914) and Neil (1924), who argued for a more ‘progressive’ educational program. Key aspects were the focus on individuality and student learning and the notion of child-centred learning, which broke away from the more traditional ‘teacher as knowledge, and passive student’ notion (Nagata, 2007). In part, schools such as those that adopted Neil’s (1924) alternative model of education were intentionally designed to challenge the traditional notion of teacher power in the teacher–student relationship (Loflin, 2003a). In Neil’s model students had agency over their own learning, with the teacher as one resource that was

available to the student. These schools emphasised the development of self-concept, problem-solving and humanistic approaches to education (Kim & Taylor, 2008).

Australia has tended to follow many of the educational trends adopted in the United Kingdom and the United States (Gilmore & Boulton-Lewis, 2009). A focus on external examinations and their effects on innovation in the curriculum and has characterised both the Australian and UK educational systems for some time (Sadler, 1987; Thompson, 2013). In the United States there has been an ongoing movement for parents to have more control over their child's schooling, and this is associated with three distinct types of alternative education: community schools and charter schools; public alternative education schools; and home schooling (Millar, 2002 as cited in Nagata, 2007). These alternative programs are diverse, and many only loosely follow the mainstream school curriculum (Kim & Taylor, 2008).

Lange and Sletten (2002) claimed that in the 1980s, concerns about the high dropout rates of students in the United States, particularly in African-American communities, led researchers to believe that alternative-education schools and programs were potential solutions to the problem of how to support students who were at risk of school failure. Loflin (2003a) maintained that in the past parents sought out alternative schools for their children because these were considered more innovative and creative educational settings. While this may still be the case, parents are now also likely to seek out alternative schools because their children are not succeeding in the traditional system. This shift in parental motivation to enrol their children in alternative programs is endorsed by Warren and Hernandez (2005), who discovered that students in alternative schools were highly motivated to complete their education 'despite literally years of frustration, failure and efforts of some teachers to tell them that a high school diploma is beyond their reach' (p. 1).

Laffitte (2008) in his analysis of alternative programs, particularly in the US context, noted that many were now set up to provide education for students who had been expelled, or suspended in the long term, often for serious offences involving drugs and violence. In some US jurisdictions, alternative programs often only exist for students who are at risk of suspension, or who have been suspended from a mainstream high school (Kleiner et al., 2002). In the Australian educational context, alternative education programs are orientated towards students who are at risk of school failure, whether by dropping out of school or being suspended (Conway, 2009). These criteria for enrolment have brought about criticism from some who consider that having programs for ‘student drop-outs’ is ineffective and damaging to the sector as a whole, as it prevents teachers making adaptations at the mainstream classroom level to accommodate the students (see Holdsworth, 2004; Loflin, 2003b; Raywid, 1995; Te Riele, 2008).

During the 1990s and 2000s, although there was some change in the mainstream system for adapting the curriculum, there was a concurrent growth in alternative schools (Martin, 2008). In part this increase was a consequence of an increase in the legal age at which a student could leave school. This rise in age was based on the concern that early school leaving disadvantaged students in the employment market (James, 2000; Watson et al., 2013).

Typical of what has happened across other Australian states, the Victorian *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* was amended to include

- a requirement for all young people to participate in schooling (meaning in school or an approved equivalent) until they finished Year 10
- a requirement for all young people who have completed Year 10 to participate full-time (defined as at least 25 hours per week) in education, training or

employment, or a combination of these activities, until they are 17 years old (Victorian Department of Education, 2016).

In Victoria, as in other Australian States, under the 2006 Education Act alternative educational programs are funded as an approved equivalent educational program. Students identified as at risk of not completing Year 10 have been the main participants (Victorian Department of Education, 2016).

In Tasmania two well-known alternative education programs that have been approved as recognised equivalent programs in terms of funding are the Beacon Foundation school program (Beacon Foundation, 2016) and the Big Picture schools (BigPicture Australia, 2016). Big Picture and Beacon operate within mainstream schools; the first Tasmanian stand-alone special assistance school was opened in 2016 (Edmund Rice Australia, Youth Plus, 2016).

In the Australian context, the effectiveness and need for alternative programs is still debated (Graham, Sweller, & Van Bergen, 2010; Martin, 2008; Morley, 1991; Te Riele, 2007) although evidence that they have an important part to play in the education landscape is gaining momentum. The debate is not about whether or not there exist disengaged and vulnerable youth; rather it is about the value of alternative, off-campus programs and whether they advantage or disadvantage participants. There is also the question of whether schools themselves should be more responsive to the needs of these students in the mainstream educational context (Almeida, Johnson, & Steinberg, 2006). On this point Almeida et al. (2006) stated:

In a society that values individual reinvention and multiple makeovers, it seems a given that we should provide a second chance to young people who drop out of high school and then make the effort to continue their education. (p. 1)

Definitions of Alternative Education

The report prepared by KPMG for the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood development (2009) defined alternative education specifically as approaches that have the expressed purpose of re-engaging students in education, although it also makes the point that

the term ‘alternative’ is no longer considered appropriate. It has different meanings depending on the program type, location and target group. It does not adequately describe the range of responses that the education and wider support system should be providing—either within schools or in other community settings. (KPMG, 2009, p. 5)

Other authors have also called for the end of the term ‘alternative education’. Te Riele (2012) suggested that ‘learning choice programs’ is a more positive and less stigmatising term. She suggested that alternative education programs can be defined as

characterised by a shared philosophy of providing enfranchising socially inclusive educational pathways for young people who, for complex reasons, are outside conventional education. (p. 6)

Te Riele (2012) also noted that the terms ‘normal’ and ‘regular’ school (with which alternative education stands in contrast) by default label the alternative education program as different, ‘abnormal’ and ‘irregular’, and by extension incorrectly labels the participants as being ‘abnormal’ for not fitting into the standard program on offer.

Types of Alternative Education

As a result of the growth in number and diversity of alternative education schools and programs in the last four decades, the terminology used to describe and differentiate within the field has yet to be agreed broadly in the research community (Aron, 2006).

Large, comparative studies are difficult to carry out across the diversity of programs for

a very heterogeneous cohort of students (Cox et al., 1995). There have been attempts to classify alternative education into types based on philosophy, target group, curriculum, duration and purpose (Glogowski, 2015; Gutherson et al., 2011; Harper, Heron, Houghton, O'Donnell, & Sargent, 2011) but, as discussed below, issues beleaguering existing typologies are that their classifications are too narrow (making the categories too many and diverse), too broad (making it difficult to separate within a group), not mutually exclusive, or focus only on one aspect of the students' program, such as location or philosophical approach (Gutherson et al., 2011). An additional problem is that educational programs specifically designed for student reengagement (as opposed to entry to the workforce, for example) are difficult to separate from other programs with different desired outcomes (Harper et al., 2011).

Types of Alternative Programs

Thomson and Russell (2007) described ten types of alternative education program based on their foci, which were vocational, work skills, basic skills, life skills, activity based, environmental, art, therapeutic, work experience and academic. Most had an element of reengaging with education, but Thomson and Russell (2007) included those where reengagement might not be in a high school setting but in a community college or training program.

Raywid (1995), in her seminal typology of alternative education still used by current researchers and theorists (Aron, 2003b; Henrich, 2005; Te Riele, 2007), proposed three types of alternative programs based on the primary objective of each. Alternative programs for reengaging disengaged students could be described as Type I or 'true alternative' programs, Type II or 'behaviour modification' programs which usually take a more punitive response to poor behaviour, or Type III or 'remedial' programs where students are taken to another setting for a short period of time 'to be

fixed', then returned to the mainstream classroom. In both Type II and III programs, students are returned to mainstream education, although Raywid (1995) argued that the students' reengagement was often poorly handled, and deemed Type II programs to be often ineffective and Type III to be effective only in the short term. It can be inferred that if reengaging students is an aim of these programs, it was not met. A decade after Raywid (1995) described the three program types, Henrich (2005) used a similar coding method, proposing a Type IV classification which he described as 'student focused': 'optional, student centred, sensitive to circumstance and [having an] integrated relationship with traditional school' (p. 33). He described the aims of such programs as 'emancipatory and progressive, with the purpose being "empowerment"' (p. 33). Te Riele (2007) agreed with Raywid's initial assumptions but suggested that reengagement programs aimed to strengthen the relationship between students and education, and this worked when both the teachers and the students participating in the program worked on a common set of goals. The same point was made by Rix and Twining (2007), who suggested that effective programs start from the needs of the students and have a long-term, individualised plan for each student in that program.

Alternative programs should not be seen as one-size-fits-all (Rix & Twining, 2007), with De Jong and Griffiths (2006) claiming that the range of alternative education programs should be placed on a continuum rather than grouped into specific types. They noted that alternative educational programs can vary by

- student to staff ratio
- provision of individualised education programs
- duration of the program
- enrolment characteristics of the participants
- program status as an integral part of the school

- location (on campus or off campus) (De Jong and Griffiths, 2006, p. 31).

They also noted that the continuum of alternative programs can be scaled, with one for those the most integrated with the school and five for an off campus and separate program. Their notion of a continuum table is outlined in Table 2.

Table 2

Continuum of alternative education programs

	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
	←—————→				
	Seamless			Separate	
Relationship to mainstream school	Withdrawal	Partial withdrawal	Parallel	Mostly part of school	Part of school
Type of program	Off campus	Partial off campus	Separate on-campus	Partially on campus	Classroom based approach
Student referral	Across districts	Across district	School or district	School	School
Run by	Specialist	District run/specialist	School or district	School	School
Resourcing	Extremely high	Very high	Very high	High	High

(Note: from De Jong & Griffiths, 2006, p. 31)

Evaluating Effective Practice in Alternative Education for Disengaged Students

In the debate about the worth of alternative programs, one of the concerns is the lack of longitudinal evaluation studies on the outcomes for young people who participate in alternative education (Thomson, 2014). Some of the difficulties in conducting research in the area of alternative education have to do with the ‘newness’ of the field (Aron, 2006), the difficulty of tracking the young people who have attended

alternative programs (Thomson, 2014), and consistency across programs (Cox et al., 1995). All these make comparison difficult (Cox et al., 1995), with the need for researchers to consider using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Gutherson et al., 2011).

The lack of a clear definition of what is meant by ‘alternative education’ means that ‘effective practice’ is difficult to identify and extrapolate across all types of programs. For example, a program for possible young offenders might be placed in the same ‘evaluation of best practice’ as a special education program for students with a disability or a withdrawal program for students with a reading difficulty. Macro structures that can influence the outcome of a program and therefore its effectiveness include teachers’ competency to teach the students in the program, administrative support, the quality of the learning environment, staff to student ratio, teacher aide support, co-operation from the ‘feeder’ and host schools, home support, curriculum relevance, financial resourcing, the composition of the participants and their willingness to participate, and the duration, stated purpose and intensity of the program.

In terms of outcomes, there is a recognition that a single measure of the effectiveness of alternative programs is not adequate and the students’ performance related to their cognitive, affective and behavioural outcomes needs to be considered (Fredricks et al., 2004). These three dimensions are reviewed next with a focus on how change is identified.

Effective practices: cognitive dimension. To increase students’ engagement in the cognitive dimension requires an improvement in at least one of three areas: the students’ perception of their competency, their willingness to engage, or the establishment of task-oriented learning goals (Fredricks et al., 2004). To improve students’ perceptions of their competency, effective programs need to teach the skills

necessary to help them improve academically (Gutherson et al., 2011; Lehr, Johnson, Bremer, Cosio, & Thompson, 2004; Thomson, 2014). Students' academic skill development and achievement takes time and considerable energy and, as Zyngier (2008) argued, 'eliminating alienation is not the same as eliminating stress or effort' (p. 1771). The indications are that the more effective programs espouse high academic expectations of their students and, importantly, that the teachers work to support their students to achieve higher academic standards (Aron, 2003a; McInerney & Smyth, 2014). The claim is that underlying academic skill development should be a focus in the development of students' literacy and numeracy (De Jong & Griffiths, 2006).

Improving a student's willingness to engage in effortful learning is typically addressed in effective alternative programs, and in better tailoring individual programs to meet the specific learning needs of the different students (Solomon & Rogers, 2001). In terms of the program it needs to be authentic and relevant to the participants (De Jong & Griffiths, 2006), to be applied (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009), and to provide for 'real life' qualifications that helps transition the individual to the next stage in their learning or to an employment-orientated program (McInerney & Smyth, 2014; Thomson, 2014). Effective programs are identified as delivering responsive, personalised curricula that closely monitor students' performance and progress (Glogowski, 2015; Lehr, Hansen, Sinclair, & Christenson, 2003; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009).

Personalised learning can also be articulated through the use of 'learning goals' and 'performance goals' (Solomon & Rogers, 2001). The indications are that when the curriculum is personalised to the students' strengths, the students are more motivated and show greater ownership over their learning, and are more engaged with the learning (De Jong & Griffiths, 2006).

In terms of specific interventions for students, the evidence is that interventions that have a strong focus on social and cognitive skills are more likely to produce positive effects, and mentoring programs where the students have a responsible ‘other’ whom they can talk with and who can support them also have a positive impact in the affective and behavioural dimensions (Gutherson et al., 2011, p. 6).

The indications from the work of Tyler and Lofstrom (2009) and McInerney and Smyth (2014) are that students’ cognitive engagement with their learning is enhanced by

- taking proactive approaches and attitudes such as flexibility with work and curriculum delivery
- using effective assessment, making use of appropriate tools that focus on students’ strengths, as well as ongoing monitoring using a range of data
- using accreditation to give the students a sense of achievement.

Effective practices: affective dimension. Reengagement in the affective dimension typically relies on increasing students’ self-concept, self-efficacy and motivation towards schooling (Fredricks et al., 2004). The staff to student ratio in alternative education programs is typically higher than in the mainstream school context, in an effort to provide more emotional and psychological support to the participants in the program (Gutherson et al., 2011; Harper et al., 2011). Because many students who are disengaged typically have poorer relationships with teachers than to their peers who are engaged with school, re-establishing a trusting relationship with teachers is important (Glogowski, 2015; Lehr, Hansen et al., 2003). Part of the development of this trust comes from appointing the ‘right’ staff to be involved with students who often have emotional, cognitive, and behavioural issues (Lehr, Hansen, et al). The evidence is that the more effective programs for students with emotional needs

have access to ‘caring’, ‘knowledgeable’ and empathic teachers and other support people who can deal with the complexities of a student’s cognitive, emotional and behavioural issues (Gutherson et al., 2011; Lehr, Hansen, et al., 2003). Staff are therefore expected to be able to deliver a relevant curriculum, but to also help the students in the program to manage their personal problems (Lehr, Hansen, et al., 2003). In addition to having access to empathic staff within the school, students in effective alternative programs typically have access to other counselling and support services (De Jong & Griffiths, 2006; Gutherson et al., 2011). Involvement of parents and families (Glogowski, 2015; KPMG, 2009) is also seen as part of a ‘wrap-around’ approach of support (De Jong & Griffiths, 2006; KPMG, 2009).

Alternative programs can exist either as a separate facility or as part of a school or other service. Harper et al. (2011, p. 12) suggested that the more effective programs typically operate out of ‘well maintained buildings that are attractive and inviting and that foster emotional well-being, sense of pride and safety’ for the students who attend. The location and setting of the program is important in terms of reducing the number of students dropping out early. Off-campus and community-based programs tend to be less effective in this regard than classroom-based or mixed-setting approaches on campus (Wilson & Tanner-Smith, 2013). Even so, as Wilson and Tanner-Smith were keen to highlight, it is the quality of the program that is important rather than its location: on this point Aron (2003a) stated that the more successful programs tend to employ ‘creative’ instruction which engages the students. Tailoring the curriculum to the students’ interests is also an element of effective educational practice in alternative educational programs (Gutherson et al., 2011). Gutherson et al. noted that there was evidence that alternative education programs that promote an improved sense of direction in their students and ‘teach’ them strategies of anger control and problem

solving are more effective: that is, they focus on teaching behavioural and affective skills as well as academic tasks.

Effective reengagement thus relies on the staff involved in the alternative education provision. One of the key components of the more effective programs is the creativity, caring and trusted nature of the staff who work with students across their affective, behavioural and cognitive needs. This is consistent with the notion that student reengagement is also about a ‘rebuilding’ of the relationship between students and their teachers.

The indications are that more effective reengagement contains six elements:

- They secure the commitment and active involvement of parents, carers and young people (Glogowski, 2015).
- They establish credibility and trust between the students and the staff (Lehr, Hansen, et al., 2003).
- They provide ongoing support beyond the life of the program (Tilleczek et al., 2011; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009).
- They use a wide range of health services and community-based partners (Gable et al. (2006).
- They keep students on the school roll or maintain contact to create a sense of expectation of a return to education (KPMG, 2009).
- They use an appropriate range of educational and support services and expertise to provide a tailored response to each student (Gutherson et al., 2011).

Effective practices: behavioural dimension. Increasing engagement in the behavioural dimension involves improvement in the students’ in-class conduct, participation in learning activities, attendance at school and homework completion

(Archambault et al., 2009). The more effective programs typically increase students' engagement in positive behaviour by explicitly teaching the students pro-social skills along with strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour, and working with the students in positive and humanistic ways (De Jong & Griffiths, 2006; Glogowski, 2015). The more effective alternative programs also work to build the students' level of social competency (Hammond et al., 2007) and emotional wellbeing (Thomson, 2014). This personal and social learning can be delivered through case management and mentoring by the staff (Glogowski, 2015; KPMG, 2009) and through a personal, affective, focused counselling (Lehr, Lanners, & Lange, 2003). In addition, having a meaningful curriculum that the student can have success with reduces the level of anxiety and fear of failure, which, in turn improves the students' attitude and behaviour towards school (Gutherson et al., 2011). Similarly, poor school attendance typically can be addressed through more effective pedagogical programs that are better tailored to the participants (Harper et al., 2011; KPMG, 2009).

In terms of specific approaches, Gutherson et al. (2011) suggested that the general approaches advocated in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, which teach strategies for anger control, problem solving, and anxiety reduction can be incorporated into alternative education programs. The evidence is that students' level of behavioural reengagement is enhanced by the following:

- The curriculum is relevant and is focused on behavioural and affective dimensions as well as academic skills (Dynarski & Gleason, 2002, p. 2; Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005, p. 44).
- Students learn strategies such as anger management, team building, and self-control (Gutherson et al. (2011)).

- The program has a philosophy that aims to enhance students' self-esteem and learning capacity and takes a therapeutic approach that is student-centred and goal-oriented (Rix & Twining, 2007; Wilson & Tanner-Smith, 2013).

Evaluating Alternative Programs

The KPMG (2009) evaluation report on alternative programs used both survey (quantitative) and interview (qualitative) methods. This mixed-method approach was also used in the United Kingdom in the OfSTED (2014) large-scale evaluation of alternative programs. The OfSTED (2014) report noted that around 80% of the Year 11 students enrolled in alternative programs gained an accreditation in English and Mathematics; the authors noted, however, that there was diversity in the cohort and that the context influenced the outcome. They collected a range of data, used a number of data collection points, and followed up with students after the intervention. A mixed-method approach was also undertaken by Wilson and Tanner-Smith (2013), who investigated students' outcomes in alternative programs based on a comparison of the students with students not in alternative programs. Although the authors identified problems with this comparison approach, they noted that students in alternative programs had lower dropout rates than at-risk students who remained in the mainstream school.

Narrative inquiry, student 'portraits' and case studies have also been used to investigate alternative programs (see for example Mills & McGregor, 2013; Smyth & McInerney, 2012). In addition, student destination surveys have been used to evaluate the success of alternative provision. For example, the OfSTED (2014) study identified from destination surveys that alternative programs with strong links to industry had greater success in placing their students into employment or training than alternative programs with poorer industry links.

When evaluating student engagement as a process, the trend has been not to use single point measures but rather to use a pre- and post- and then an after-program measure as a follow-up, and to use a number of different measures that look at the participants' academic and social development (Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Algozzine, 2006). This need for a range of measures was articulated by Zyngier (2008), who asserted that educators and teachers cannot necessarily presume that students who achieve a satisfactory or even a high level of academic achievement are also engaged.

The notion that in an evaluation of alternative programs a multidimensional approach is needed is also articulated by Kim and Taylor (2008). These authors argued that for a program to be considered successful it needs to have provided an environment where the students 'realized their future career goals' and developed higher-level thinking skills such as 'critical thinking' and the 'synthesis of concepts' (Kim & Taylor, 2008, p. 4); such constructs are not easily measured, but are ascertained more through observation by teachers and others and in student discussions and interviews, as well as by in-class performance.

Problems, Concerns and Criticisms of Alternative Education

Logically, the notion that a school system should provide an array of services and programs to students should be seen as positive, given that diversity is a characteristic of the student cohort across the world (Ysseldyke et al., 2006). This, however, is not the case; and there is debate about the value of alternative programs, particularly for those identified as students with behavioural difficulties (Conway 2009).

De Jong and Griffiths (2006, p. 31) identified seven main criticisms of alternative education: deficit approach; contamination effect; handballing problems; sustainability; cultural intolerance; intolerance to difference; and inclusive practice. In addition to

these concerns, a lack of educational success as well as poor reintegration of students from these programs can be added to the list (Granite & Graham, 2012).

Deficit approach.

As they are catering for students who have not succeeded in mainstream education, alternative education practitioners often focus on the academic and social deficits of their students (Henrich, 2005). Common criticism of this ‘deficit approach’ refers to programs that try to ‘fix’ the student (Mills & McGregor, 2013; Raywid, 1995). Rather than seeing the students as disenfranchised and marginalised by teachers, the schooling process and even society, in the deficit approach students who do not ‘fit’ the mainstream classroom are removed from that setting in order to be ‘rehabilitated’ before being returned to the mainstream (Granite & Graham, 2012). The learning and behaviour ‘problem’ is seen as being within the student and not, in part, also residing with the teachers of the school or the program they have provided to the student. Smyth and McInerney (2012) explained that seeing the student as the problem means that the student has the deficit. A student deficit approach can result in victim-blaming, whereby becoming disconnected from school is attributed to various factors including ‘an enduring lack of commitment and self-discipline on the part of the young people themselves’ (p. 20). Te Riele (2006) argued that using a deficit model further marginalises those most disadvantaged in society, and Kim and Taylor (2008) noted that deficit based programs can stigmatise the students attending them, and by labelling the student as deficit tacitly blame educational failure on the student, rather than on the school for a lack of support and choice offered at the classroom level.

Contamination effect. Graham et al. (2010) suggested that schools or programs specifically designed for students with behaviour management problems can indirectly act as ‘training grounds’ where new students learn additional antisocial and even

criminal-like behaviours from older members of the program. In support of this suggestion there appears to be a high correlation with students' initial enrolment in a school for students with behaviour problems and later adult incarceration (Bouhours & Bryer, 2005). De Jong and Griffiths (2006) explained that students with mild antisocial behaviours learn and model new behaviours from peers with more severe levels of antisocial behaviour. Thus, some students are contaminated by their peers and influenced to 'embrace values and attitudes that can predictably lead to unlawful and further at-risk activities' (De Jong and Griffiths, p. 32).

If the culture within a reengagement program is positive, supportive, trusting, and caring (Gutherson et al., 2011), then presumably the new students will model this alternative behaviour. In this context a 'positive contamination' effect would take place, where students learn new relationship skills and behaviours.

Handballing problems. Alternative education programs can become 'dumping grounds' for 'problem youth' (De Jong & Griffiths, 2006, p. 32). The claim is that putting at-risk and valuable youth together in one place means that the problem is 'out of sight, and out of mind'. 'Ghettoing' students with problems, particularly students who are disruptive, in one place takes away the responsibility for teachers to modify their program to accommodate these students in a regular setting (Holdsworth, 2004; Kim, 2011). Thomson (2014) noted that families often felt powerless and alienated from the administrative procedure that transferred their child into a program that the parents did not fully understand.

Sustainability. In her proposed typology of alternative education, Te Riele (2007) recognised that the financial and staffing stability of a program had an impact on its effectiveness. Commenting mainly on the Australian setting, Te Riele maintained that the uncertainty of available funding and the fact that the programs are often run by

community boards or charitable organisations means their sustainability is not always secure. Their reliance on short-term funding, as well as a lack of recognition of the specialist skills required by staff, often led to alternative programs having a ‘limited life span’, while the staff involved experienced ‘burnout’ and stress (De Jong & Griffiths, 2006, p. 32).

Cultural intolerance. Alternative education programs contain an over-representation of students from ethnic minorities (Fredricks, 2014), students who are indigenous (Mills & McGregor, 2013), students who are recent migrants (Te Riele, 2006), and students who are male (Gable et al., 2006). This leads to the criticism that the alternative education placements and off campus programs may inadvertently lead to mainstream teachers and schools not adapting to the needs of their students and not adequately catering for students who are culturally diverse or who show difference from the majority of the student cohort (De Jong & Griffiths, 2006).

Intolerance to difference. As in the criticism above, the mere fact that alternative education exists as a response to student disengagement has led to the criticism that mainstream schools do not, and should not, deal with behavioural and other educational issues that are challenging (Mills, Renshaw, & Zipin, 2013). Graham et al. (2010) reported that in New South Wales the number of schools for students with behavioural difficulties had increased, with more students with emotional and behaviour disorders (EBD) being segregated from the mainstream setting; a disproportionate percentage of them were male. Similar trends have been reported in the United Kingdom (De Jong & Griffiths, 2006). The implication is that mainstream teachers and schools have a reduced

capacity for tolerance, or a reduced willingness to make the necessary adjustments to cater for students identified as having behavioural or emotional problems.

Lack of educational rigour. Raywid (1995) proposed that alternative education programs often do not focus on implementing the standard curriculum. It has also been argued that some programs lack academic integrity (Granite & Graham, 2012) and are seen as a ‘holding space’ for students until they can legally leave school (Jahnukainen, 2001), or are ‘warehousing’ or acting as a ‘dumping ground’ for students who are hard to manage in the regular classroom (Kim, 2011).

Many of the concerns identified above are, in part, the result of a lack of effective evaluation of alternative programs and what they can and cannot achieve (OfSTED, 2014), as well as a lack of evidence of the positive or negative longitudinal outcomes for students who participate in these programs (Thomson, 2014). The indications are that when there have been comparable Australian studies based on academic attainment results, the students from alternative programs achieved at significantly lower levels than the state average (Te Riele, 2012).

Reintegration into mainstream school. Although there is evidence that alternative education programs do assist students in the short term, some researchers have highlighted concerns that these positive changes are not maintained when the students return to the original context in which they experienced conflict or lack of success (Carswell, Hanlon, Watts, & O’Grady, 2012). This failure of sustainability has been attributed to a lack of ongoing services and support for students who return to their ‘home’ school (OfSTED, 2014), a lack of peer support (Lloyd & Padfield, 1996), or simply the inability of mainstream teachers to match the quality of the student–teacher relationship or the program provided in the alternative educational setting (Hilton, 2006; Lown, 2007).

Does Alternative Education Work?

Gutherson et al. (2011) noted that there was little evidence as to the mechanisms behind the claims of the effectiveness of educational practice in alternative education programs. Daniels et al. (2003) examined the trajectories of 193 permanently excluded students and identified that their attitudes to teachers and schooling, and the extent of external support they received from teachers and others, were important factors in their outcomes.

Although there has been greater acceptance of the three-dimensional construct of student engagement (cognitive, behavioural and affective), there has been less agreement about how the dimensions intersect, interact and overlap (Shernoff, 2013). How the three dimensions interact has been identified as an area of further research (Li & Lerner, 2013; Munns et al., 2012).

Typically, researchers have used quantitative methods to determine which factors of disengagement predict others. For example, Lee and Burkam (2003) noted that school structures such as size and subjects offered, and then relationships with teachers, influenced the drop-out level. In other words, the 'impact of positive relations is ... contingent on the organisational and structural characteristics of high school' (Lee & Burkam, 2003, p. 353). Although Lee and Burkam (2003) demonstrates an example of a predictable sequence of factors affecting engagement, other researchers such as Fredricks et al. (2004) have described the process of disengaging as complex, with a level of reciprocal causation between the student and the student's teachers.

Summary

The indications are that the theoretical concept of engagement, being comprised of cognitive, behavioural and affective dimensions, has progressed to the stage where it can be considered an accepted model by which to evaluate alternative programs

(Christenson et al., 2012; Shernoff, 2013; Skinner, Furrer, Marchand, & Kindermann, 2008; Wang, Bergin & Bergin, 2014). In particular the cognitive, behavioural and affective dimensions adopted in this research provide a useful framework on which to construct the evaluation. The research evidence of each dimension is summarised below.

Evidence of Cognitive Engagement

Cognitive and academic engagement can be measured by grades, performance on standardised tests, or graduation (Appleton et al., 2006); a student's willingness to learn (Archambault et al., 2009); and self-regulation, meeting learning goals and investing in learning (Fredricks et al., 2004). When discussing effective alternative education programs, Zyngier (2008) suggested that the development of stronger curriculum skills and vocational preparation are measures of success. Accreditation and attendance (Steedman & Stoney, 2004) are also measures of academic success in effective programs.

Evidence of Affective Engagement

Self-awareness of feelings, regulation of emotion, conflict resolution skills (Appleton et al., 2006), liking school and having an interest in schoolwork (Archambault et al., 2009), a sense of belonging and a positive attitude about learning (Fredricks et al., 2004), are all indicators of affective engagement. Effective alternative programs see improved student wellbeing (Zyngier, 2008), a positive attitude toward the future (Steedman & Stoney, 2004), and personal and social adjustment (Lange & Lehr, 1999). Similarly, Cox et al. (1995) used an emotional engagement variable based upon various self-esteem and self-concept instruments from their metastudy of 57 programs, and produced a general 'attitude to school' outcome by combining measures of attachment to school, attitude, and commitment to school.

Evidence of Behavioural Engagement

Appleton et al. (2006) suggested that social awareness and relationships skills with peers and adults can be measured. Archambault et al. (2009) used school records on discipline and attendance, and Fredricks et al. (2004) used positive conduct, effort and participation records for this purpose. Authors on outcomes in effective alternative education settings have included the level of behaviour modification and community involvement (Zyngier, 2008), reduction in criminal activity (Steedman & Stoney 2004), and a sense of citizenship and social responsibility as good measures of a successful program (Lange & Lehr 1999). Police reports, juvenile court records and self-reported delinquency data were combined for a general 'delinquency' outcome by Cox et al. (1995) in their meta-analysis of outcomes.

Need for More Evaluation

The indications from the research literature on alternative education, specifically in the construct of reengaging disengaged youth and the use of the cognitive, behavioural and affective dimensions approach to evaluating alternative programs, have typically not been consistently employed in program evaluations. Given the level of concern about alternative programs (Granite & Graham, 2012; Jahnukainen, 2001; Kim, 2011; Raywid, 1995), particularly for students who have behavioural problems, an investigation of alternative education programs for disengaged youth from the perspective of cognitive, behavioural and affective dimensions would assist in clarifying the value of alternative programs.

There is a call for more research on how the three dimensions of engagement can be measured, how they interact, intersect, impact upon, and overlay each other (Li & Lerner, 2013). On this point, Wang et al. (2014) suggested that Likert scale surveys had the potential to help researchers investigate the effectiveness of programs across the

three dimensions of cognitive, behavioural and affective outcomes. In their development of the Classroom Engagement Index, Wang et al. (2014) acknowledged the importance of teachers' observational data on students, and of interview data. They argued that a number of measures needed to be taken over time to investigate the changing nature of students' engagement. This research adopts a theoretical framework of engagement that requires both qualitative and quantitative data collection. As engagement is viewed as a process, the data need to be collected at the start of the alternative program, at its end, and later again as a follow-up.

This study will evaluate an alternative education program for high school students at risk of disengaging from school using cognitive, behavioural and affective outcomes as measures.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The research methodology used in this study has quantitative and qualitative research components to investigate the two questions:

- To what extent, and in what ways, was the Reengagement for Disengaged Youth (ReDY) program effective?
- For participating students, did this effectiveness extend across the cognitive, behavioural and affective dimensions of engagement?

The first section of this chapter provides an overview of the ReDY program, its setting, the participants, and the different forms of data collection and evaluation employed in this research. The second section addresses the specific data collection procedures, outlining the different parts of the study and the participants and procedures associated with each of the data collection procedures.

Section A: Overview

Setting

The name of the school, its location, and the names of all staff and students mentioned in this study have been de-identified in line with ethical consent agreements. ReDY program (not its real name) was housed in an independent educational building on the campus of the host school. The host school is a Catholic co-educational Kindergarten to Year 10 non-government school, situated in Tasmania, a regional and rural state with pockets of social and economic disadvantage (ABS, 2011). The Catholic Order of the host school has a long and strong tradition of educating, including students from disadvantaged communities.

At the time the host school had around 880 students and 56 teachers. It had an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) of 966, which is below the national School ICSEA mean of 1000; 67% of its students were in the lower half of the

ICSEA range (AITSL school profile). Much of the student population was drawn from suburbs identified as being disadvantaged. Many of the students who enrolled in the alternative program lived in communities where parental school attainments were generally low: 18.7% of the catchment area population had been educated to, or below, Year 9 standards (ABS, 2011).

The host school had an active primary school (Kindergarten to Year 6). The high school (Years 7 to 10) population was approximately double that of the primary school, due to a large yearly Year 7 intake. The ‘feeder’ primary schools were all from the surrounding areas, both Catholic and State Government schools. Based on school records, less than half the students identified as Catholic, and only a small group of these consider themselves to be ‘practising’. The two state high schools in the same area each offered some level of alternative program to address the needs of students who were disconnecting from schooling in the area.

The host school had a process of identifying ‘students of concern’, and a designated pastoral care team of senior teachers and school counsellors put in place strategies to keep students at school and positively engaged in learning. The ReDY program started as an initiative of the principal of the host high school in 2010. In part it could be classified as a third tier or ‘tertiary intervention program’ (Sugai & Horner, 2009) for students who ‘were just too hard to try to reengage ... standard conventional efforts had been made and they didn’t work’ (Interview, host school principal, 2015). Between 2010 and 2014, 46 students enrolled in the ReDY program.

The ReDY Program

The program started as an initiative of the current principal to address the needs of students who were not succeeding in the mainstream. It was located in old football club rooms on the edge of the school property, with an entrance and car park separate from

the main campus. Surrounding the building were gardens created and cared for by the students. A large outdoor table setting, as well as a tool shed, flanked the entrance, both made by the students. On the outside wall was a mosaic designed and created by the students of Don Bosco, a significant person in the history of the school. There was a vegetable garden on the northern side of the grounds, which provided produce for the ReDY program.

Inside, the building offered a large, open, multiple-use space. Students' artwork and photos were displayed on the walls, and there was a reading corner with comfortable couches and two well used, small pool (snooker) tables in the centre of the room. Ten individual computer stations lined one wall, opposite a wall of windows overlooking the football oval. Student desks were situated in a double semi-circle, separated from each other and facing the electronic whiteboard. Three teacher's desks, covered in papers, laptops, and books, sat next to or behind the student desks. The ceiling was covered with panel heaters, and natural light flowed into the room. On either side of the whiteboard were two open doorways; the left to a small kitchen and the right to a dining room with murals. The dining table was painted as a large surfboard.

Between the computer desks a hallway led to a staffroom, which looked more like a storeroom, and a meeting room. The meeting room was painted by the students in a mural of the surrounding vista, and contained three couches, a small table and a heater.

A total of five staff members were involved in the ReDY program, with three active at any one time. I have not included myself as a participant in the research. The ages of staff ranged from 24 to 50. There were two social educators, two teachers and the host school principal. The social educators had qualifications from TAFE, and one had enrolled in a Bachelor of Applied Teaching at the University of Tasmania. The teachers all had tertiary qualifications, with one having training and experience in youth

work. The principal and one teacher were female, the two social educators and the other teacher were male. Two of the five staff lived within the same suburb as the school was located.

The ReDY program was described by the host school as ‘individual, goal based and choice based’ for students who for ‘whatever reason have disengaged from education’. Students enrolled in the host school, and who were considered by the pastoral care team as possible enrolments into the ReDY program, were invited to initiate a meeting with the ReDY program staff. If the student elected to pursue enrolment in the program, he or she met with the program staff to jointly identify individual goals, which then formed the basis of the individual education plan for that student.

The ReDY program enrolled between 8 and 12 students at any one time and accepted a new student when there was space, rather than at a designated time in the school calendar. At the time this study was conducted there were three staff involved in the program. Students were collected from their homes or other meeting point in the morning and returned in the afternoon, on a small school bus driven by one of the staff members. The timetable of the ReDY program was flexible, but typically followed a structure of individualised numeracy and literacy lessons in the mornings, daily group physical exercise in the form of a 20-minute physical activity, game or run before lunch, and practical or specialised subjects in the afternoon, such as horticulture or cooking. Morning teas and lunches were prepared by the students, and the group, including the staff, ate together. On Fridays students were involved in recreation, and at the time of this study they had elected to learn how to surf.

The Curriculum

The curriculum was structured on the Australian Curriculum. In contrast to the mainstream education program, where general capabilities were ‘addressed through the content of the learning areas’ (ACARA, 2016), in ReDY general capabilities were addressed less in the mainstream year level content and more in activities selected by the students in co-operation with the staff. The general capabilities in the Australian Curriculum include literacy, numeracy, ICT capability, critical and creative thinking, personal and social capability, ethical understanding and intercultural understanding. In ReDY, project-based learning was designed by the program staff around two or more of these themes and would often last for a 10-week term. At entry to the program students were reviewed academically so that their literacy and numeracy needs could be addressed at appropriate levels. When a student was ready to transition back to mainstream education, the program staff integrated the curriculum content that was current in the host school, so that when the student returned they had been studying similar content in all subject areas for some time.

The behaviour management approach in the ReDY program may be described as non-directive intervention (Edwards & Watts, 2010) where, in private consultations, students were made aware of the impact of their behaviour ‘choices’, and counselling was provided to assist the students make choices and review strategies. If students decided they did not want to continue in the program they were encouraged to reflect on their choices and to talk confidentially with the host school’s pastoral care team. Students exited the ReDY program after approximately twelve months of enrolment, or when they deemed that their goals had been met, or they perceived they had the confidence to return to mainstream schooling. In the ten weeks prior to leaving, students

typically undertook a transition to a mainstream school, usually the host school or a Tasmanian Year 11 and 12 senior college.

The Students in the Study

Forty-six students, aged between 12 and 16, were enrolled in the ReDY program between 2010 and 2014. Most came into the program in Year 8 or 9 from the host high school. There were 26 (57%) male students and 20 (43%) female, all from the region near the school or further north. Although the host school was fee-paying, most students in the ReDY program either paid reduced fees or were exempted for family financial reasons.

About 60% of the ReDY cohort came from single parent households. Their parents and caregivers had a diverse range of occupations; few had completed post-secondary studies, and many had not been successful at school. A significant portion of them were on a government support benefit of some kind. Of the 46 students in this study, three identified themselves to be of Aboriginal heritage, one was a recent migrant from Eritrea, and the majority of the rest could be generally identified as coming from an Anglo-Celtic or European heritage and spoke English as their first language in the home.

Of the 46 students who started in the ReDY program:

- 21 (46%) returned to the host school. Of these, 19 completed Year 10 at the host school
- 9 (20%) were in Year 10 in the ReDY program and went on to Year 11 at a senior secondary college
- 3 (6%) were in Year 10 in the ReDY program and moved on to a work training program

- 4 (8%) completed the ReDY program and went to a school other than the host school
- 9 (20%) did not complete the ReDY program
- 2 (4%) left before Year 10 on the recommendation of the teachers in the program.

The Evaluation Procedure Used in This Study

The theoretical framework for the design of the data collection procedures used in this research focused on separating engagement into three dimensions: cognitive, affective and behavioural. Based on the research literature each of these dimensions can be subdivided into actions, perceptions, and outcomes that are connected to the individual dimension. This subdivision is outlined in Table 3.

In case study research a range of data sources are expected to be collected over time (Swanborn, 2010). To address the two research questions, six data sources were employed in this study: a survey, academic student data from the host school, host school reports, program reports, staff interviews and student interviews. As illustrated in Table 3, each data source provided information about some, or all, of the indicators of engagement across the three dimensions.

To be able to compare change in student engagement, data reflecting these indicators at three points in time were gathered as shown in Table 4. Some data sources, such as the host school reports and host school data, were collected at different times, while other data such as the survey, program reports and interviews asked students to reflect on their time before or during the program. The six pieces of evidence are in different forms and include the actions of students and teachers, the words teachers used to report on students, the words students used to reflect on their experiences, the numbers teachers used to rate students' work ethic, the numbers students used to rate

themselves, and the transcripts from interviews. Table 5 indicates when data were gathered.

Table 3

Dimensions and indicators of student engagement by data source

<u>Dimension of engagement</u>	<u>Indicator of student engagement</u>	<u>Data Source</u>					
		Survey	School data	Host School reports	Program reports	Staff Interviews	Student Interviews
Cognitive	Perception of competency	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Willingness to engage with classroom tasks			X	X	X	X
	Establishment of task-oriented and learning goals			X	X	X	X
Affective	Enjoyment of school	X		X	X	X	X
	Sense of belonging			X		X	X
	Attitude towards school			X	X	X	X
	Interest in schoolwork			X		X	X
	Value of education			X		X	X
Behavioural	Conduct	X		X	X	X	X
	Homework completion			X	X	X	X
	Participation			X	X	X	X
	Attendance	X	X	X	X	X	X

Table 4

Time period for which each data source gave information for analysis

	Survey	Host school data	Host school reports	Program reports	Staff interviews	Student interviews
Before the program	X	X	X	X	X	X
During the program	X			X	X	X
After the program	X	X	X		X	X

Table 5

Time period when each data source was collected

	Survey	Host school data	Host school reports	Program reports	Staff interviews	Student interviews
Before the program		X	X			
At entry to the program				X		
On completion of the program				X		
After the program	X	X	X		X	X

Each data source was written or generated by a different person or group, as illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6

Origins of research data

Source of data	Survey	Host school data	Host school reports	Program report	Staff interview	Student interview
Student	X			X		X
Host school staff		X	X		X	
Program staff				X	X	

Section B: The Specific Data Collection Procedures

This section outlines details of the six sources of data that informed this research. Each type of data had specific recruitment consent conditions, data collection methods, and analysis procedures.

Source One: Student Survey

Participants. All 46 students who enrolled in the ReDY program from its inception in February 2010, as well as any student who completed the ReDY program by December 2014, were invited via Facebook to participate in the survey (see Appendix E). A total of 22 (48%) participated in the survey, 11 (24%) were contacted but did not participate and 13 (28%) were non-contactable.

- Of the 22 who participated, the seven (32%) were under 17 and had returned to the host school were contacted and gave consent (and parental consent); 15 (68%) were over 17 and gave consent online.
- Of the 11 who were contacted but did not participate, nine were under 17 years old and two were over 17 years old.
- Of the 13 who were non-contactable six were under 17 and seven were older.

Consent. Both the host high school and the governing body of Catholic schools in Tasmania gave consent to place an invitation to participate on the host school's alumni Facebook page. If students chose to participate, they needed to complete (and have a parent complete if they were under 17 years of age) an information and consent form before they had access to the online survey (Appendix E). The survey data remained identifiable only by a code until individual students involved in the interview stage gave consent for the data to be identified.

Data collection. The survey was administered online using Qualtrics software.

Quantitative analysis. The survey responses were imported into SPSS software for analysis. Means and standard deviations were calculated for the cohort, and paired t-tests were conducted to determine whether there was any significant change in the comparison questions.

Survey questions. Three types of question were used in the survey to identify levels of engagement across the three dimensions. These are described below as comparison questions, rating questions and information tables. The full survey can be seen in Appendix K.

Comparison questions asked participants to answer a question on a 10 point Likert scale from 0, 'A major problem in my life', to 10, 'No problem in my life', at three points in time: in the year before they came to the ReDY program, while they were attending the program, and in the year after they left.

Rating questions asked the participants to respond on a 10 point Likert scale to statements. Options for responses always placed the negative response at 0 (not true, never, not at all important), and the positive responses at 10 (true, always, very important). Comparison and rating questions are outlined in Table 7.

Table 7

Comparison and rating survey questions arranged by dimension of engagement

Dimension of engagement	Comparison Questions	Rating Questions
Cognitive	Did you find doing schoolwork easy?	Because I went to the ReDY program I was better at schoolwork
Affective	Was managing anger a problem for you?	Because I went to the ReDY program I was healthier
	Was managing anxiety a problem for you?	Because I went to the ReDY program I was better at dealing with my emotions
	Would you say that school was a good place to be?	
	Did you enjoy your time at high school?	
Behavioural	How was your family life?	If I didn't go to the ReDY program, I would be doing different things now
	How did you get along with your peers?	
	How well did you get on with your teachers?	Because I went to the ReDY program, I stayed at school longer
		How important do you think coming to the ReDY program was for your future?
		Because I went to the ReDY program, I was better at being with people

The third type of question on the survey took the form of a table and asked students to complete as many parts of the table as were relevant using drop down options. Examples are given in Table 8 (for full survey see Appendix K).

Table 8

Example of question on survey

<u>What best describes what you did in the years after you left the ReDY program?</u>					
	School/TAFE or CollegeUni	Full Time work	Part time work	Looking for work	Other
In the first few months after the program					
The year after you left					
The second year after you left					
The third year after you left					

Source Two: School Data

Participants. All 46 students who enrolled in the ReDY program from its inception in February 2010 up to and including any student who completed their time in the program by December 2014 were included.

Consent. Consent for the de-identified school data was given by both the host school and the governing body of Catholic schools in Tasmania (Appendix B, C). The data remained identifiable only by code until individual students involved in an interview gave consent for their data to be identified.

Data collection. The school granted permission to access school data for attendance and the standardised progressive assessment tests for these students. The data was de-identified and linked to individuals by code. Students participating in the interview granted permission to re-identify the school data.

Quantitative analysis. Standardised results from the Progressive Assessment Tests (PAT) for numeracy and literacy were averaged across the various components of the tests where applicable. A paired t-test was then conducted to determine any significant difference from tests completed before the ReDY program and those completed during or after. Attendance rates for all students before ($N = 46$), during, and

after (N = 12) the program were averaged and compared for significant differences using a series of paired t-tests.

Source Three: Host School Report Cards

Participants. All 46 students who enrolled in the ReDY program from its conception in February 2010, up to and including any student who completed their time in the ReDY program by December 2014, were included in this study.

Consent. Consent to use the de-identified school reports was given by both the host school and the governing body of Catholic schools in Tasmania (Appendix B, C). The reports remained identifiable only by a code until individual students gave consent for the data to be identified if they were involved in an interview. I could not connect the data from the school reports or the ReDY program without the expressed consent of the student.

Data collection.

The school granted permission to access all the school reports for these students. Each report from the year before entering the ReDY program (N = 46) as well as for any students who returned to the host school after the program (N = 12) was collected. As students entered and exited the ReDY program at various times throughout the year, and the school reports that included teacher comments were only published in second term, the time between the report being written and the student entering the program varied from one to six months. Quantitative analysis. The school reports yielded four data sets that enabled comparisons of students' engagement before and after participation in the ReDY program. The reports contained in-class grades (results) as awarded by the students teachers, as well as teacher ratings of the students' 'work ethic', for example, 'treats others with respect'. The information by the teachers on each student's progress and achievement was coded and quantified (see Table 7).

The total number of each grade (on an A to E scale) awarded for each criterion, for each subject, was tallied and represented as a percentage of total grades given for all students in the comparison group (N = 12). On this scale A is the highest grade (rating) and E the lowest. The same process was undertaken for the reports for the students who returned to the host school after the ReDY program. The percentage of grades awarded that were below satisfactory (grades D and E) were compared with the percentage of grades that were above satisfactory (grades A and B). It should be noted that the teachers who wrote the reports, the subjects, and the number of subjects before intervention were not necessarily the same as those who did so after the intervention.

The teacher ratings on the school reports of ‘treats others with respect’ had five possible ratings: ‘Excellent’, ‘Good’, ‘Satisfactory’, ‘Fair’ and ‘Unsatisfactory’. The total number of each rating was tallied for the student reports before the ReDY program and compared with the reports of the same students after they returned to the host school.

Indications of cognitive engagement. The teacher ratings of student ‘work ethic’ as indicated on the school reports consisted of three separately rated criteria: ‘arrives punctually and prepared for class’, ‘engages in and contributes to classwork’, and ‘completes set work and meets deadlines’. Five possible rating existed: ‘Excellent’, ‘Good’, ‘Satisfactory’, ‘Fair’ and ‘Unsatisfactory’. The total number of each rating was calculated for all students who had reports before and after the program (N = 12).

Teacher comments were written on each of the individual subject reports as well as by the home room teacher. As illustrated in Table 7, each teacher comment was coded into predetermined codes for the cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions of engagement (see Table 9). These codes were then coded again into ‘positive’ comments, those reflecting an encouraging or congratulatory teacher response, and

‘negative’ comments, which criticised or suggested an area where the student needed to improve.

Table 9

Coding example for teacher’s comments on students’ reports

Dimension of engagement	Examples of positive comments	Examples of negative comments
Cognitive	<p>‘Always punctual and well-prepared for class’</p> <p>‘He is continuing to apply himself in this subject’</p>	<p>‘He fails to complete set tasks and when submitted, his assessment tasks lack care and attention to detail’</p> <p>‘He can also quite luxuriously waste class time’</p>
Affective	<p>‘Hugh really needs to take stock and realise that the help is here’</p> <p>‘Cody is a keen and enthusiastic student who enjoys learning’</p>	<p>‘[She] needs to improve her general attitude if she is to achieve further’</p> <p>‘Harry is displaying little interest in this subject and is often distracted by too much conversation’</p>
Behavioural	<p>‘Participates well in groups’</p> <p>‘Always a willing helper’</p>	<p>‘Interrupts teacher instruction and he spoils his good efforts by getting involved in inappropriate behaviour’</p> <p>‘Is often distracted’</p>

Qualitative analysis. Using NVivo software, I conducted a content analysis of each teacher comment on the school reports. Students had between six and 10 subject comments, each written by a different teacher. Consistent with other methods of content analysis (Creswell & Clark, 2007), predetermined codes for the three dimensions plus

eleven indicators of engagement were used (see Table 3). Coded comments were sorted into emergent themes within each of the predetermined codes.

Source Four: Reengagement Program Reports

Participants. Reports from all 46 students who enrolled in the ReDY program from its conception in February 2010, up to and including any student who completed their time in the program by December 2014, were accessed with consent of the host school. Reports were written every twelve weeks of the school year and were structured around the goals that students had set to guide their time in the ReDY program. Depending on how long they were in the program, students received between no and five reports. If students entered the program at reporting time they might receive an ‘entry report’ which contained less information than a standard ReDY program report. Similarly, students who were about to exit the program to return to the host school and had not spent much time in the program might receive a ‘transition report’, which also contained less information. Of the 46 students who started the program, 29 (63%) had three or more reports, suggesting a significant duration, 10 (22%) had one or two reports, suggesting a limited duration, and 7 (15%) were in the program for a very limited time and did not receive a report:

All 46 students wrote goals upon entry. These were rated by them every 10 to 12 weeks on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 represented ‘a major problem in my life’ and 10 represented ‘no problem in my life’. These goals and ratings were included in the program reports.

Consent. Consent for the de-identified program reports was given by both the host school and the governing body of Catholic schools in Tasmania (Appendix B, C). The data remained identifiable only by a code until individual students gave consent for it to be identified if they were involved in an interview.

Data collection. The documents were de-identified and sent electronically to the researcher.

Quantitative analysis. Change in goal ratings and attendance were taken directly from each student's ultimate report in the program. Goal ratings were organised into the three dimensions of engagement; cognitive, affective and behavioural, and coded again under the elements of engagement as outlined in the theoretical framework outlined in Table 3. The initial and final goals for each dimension of engagement were averaged for cohort data.

Qualitative analysis. Comments by the students were coded using the predetermined codes outlined in the theoretical framework Table 3. When students wrote about their time in the host school before they entered the program, their remarks were coded as 'prior' comments. Comments about their time within the program were coded as 'during'. Within these predetermined codes, emergent themes were collated.

Indications of cognitive engagement. Three predetermined codes were used to organise the students' self-reflections, perceptions of competency, willingness to engage and the establishment of goals.

Perceptions of competency.

Comments were coded under this heading whenever students reflected on their academic ability. How their perception of competency changed over their reports from entry to exit from the ReDY program was noted, as well as when they felt their abilities had changed compared with when they were in the host school. Any comments projecting into the future, about how confident they were about returning to the mainstream, were also coded under this heading, as were specific goals relating to wanting to improve grades or reach academic potential.

Willingness to engage in classroom tasks. Comments were coded under this heading whenever students reflected the effort they were willing to put into their learning. How these changed in their reports from entry to exit from the program was noted, as well as when students felt their abilities had changed compared with when they were in mainstream school. Specific goals relating to wanting to work hard or increase effort were also coded under this heading.

Establishment of task-oriented and learning goals. As the establishment of goals was an embedded part of the ReDY program, it was important to distinguish the types of goal that students wrote they wanted to achieve. The two types, task-oriented and learning tools, were coded separately whenever students talked about wanting to get better at mastering a content area or skill. Given the nature of this indicator of engagement, most of these comments were future-projecting rather than comparing past experiences. Specific goals relating to mastering a specific content area, for example spelling, or to improving a learning tool such as concentration, were coded under this heading.

Indications of affective engagement.

Enjoyment of school. Comments relating to how a student was enjoying school while in the ReDY program, and how they enjoyed school before the program, were coded under this heading. External influences that affected the enjoyment of school, such as peers, were separated from internal influences, such as anxiety. Goals in this area were sorted into two categories of wanting to enjoy school more: for personal reasons such as mental health, and for social reasons like handling bullying or becoming more resilient.

Sense of belonging. Comments were coded under this heading when students talked about feeling comfortable in the program, as were specific goals relating to wanting to feel more connected to school.

Attitude towards school. Specific goals relating to wanting to improve attitude towards school in subjects were coded under this heading.

Interest in schoolwork. Specific goals relating to wanting to improve interest in subjects were coded under this heading.

Value of education. Specific goals indicating a desire to value education differently were coded under this heading.

Indications of behavioural engagement.

Conduct. Comments relating to student conduct and compliance with rules were coded under this heading. As many students nominated improvement in this area as a focus, there were many comparisons of conduct while in the ReDY program and while in mainstream. As well as comments on the behavioural choices they were making, their mention of strategies and assistance that they had received were also noted. Specific goals in this area were also sorted into four categories: conduct with teachers, conduct related to peers such as bullying, improving classroom behaviour, and developing better anger management strategies.

Homework completion. Specific goals relating to wanting to improve completion of homework were coded under this heading.

Participation. Specific goals relating to wanting to participate more or improve communication skills at school were coded under this heading.

Attendance. Specific goals relating to wanting to improve attendance or punctuality were coded under this heading.

Source Five: Staff Interviews

Participants. All staff who were directly involved in the ReDY program from its inception in February 2010 until the end of 2014 were invited to participate in an interview; all did so. This included

- one principal
- two teachers
- two social educators

Consent. Consent to approach program staff was given by both the host school and the governing body of Catholic schools in Tasmania. Participants were given information about the interview process and completed a consent form prior to commencement (Appendix H).

Data collection. Interviews with the teachers and social educators were conducted on the ReDY site in three sessions (one teacher and a social educator shared an interview). The interview with the principal was conducted in her office in the host school. Each interview lasted for 35–50 minutes and was conducted in a semi-structured manner (Kervin, Vialle, Howard, Herrington, & Okely, 2016).

Analysis. Interviews were transcribed and uploaded to the NVivo software program. Consistent with other researchers' use of content analysis of interviews (Cohen, 2007), they were first coded under predetermined codes relating to the three dimensions of engagement and then recoded to develop conceptual themes that provided a deeper understanding of the experiences and perceptions of the students in relation to their perceptions of engagement (Creswell, 2002).

Table 10

Staff interview questions by dimension of student engagement

Dimension of engagement	Interview questions
Cognitive	<p>Do you notice a difference in the returning students' academic engagement? Explain.</p> <p>During the duration of the program, did you notice a difference in the students' academic engagement? Explain.</p> <p>How do you account for this change in engagement?</p> <p>Have you had students who have not increased engagement?</p> <p>Why not, do you think?</p>
Affective	<p>Do you notice a difference in the returning students' emotional wellbeing? Explain.</p> <p>During the duration of the program, did you notice a difference in the students' emotional wellbeing? Explain.</p> <p>How do you account for this change in engagement?</p> <p>Have you had students who have not increased engagement?</p> <p>Why not, do you think?</p>
Behavioural	<p>Do you notice a difference in the returning students' behaviour? Explain.</p> <p>During the duration of the program, did you notice a difference in the students' behaviour? Explain.</p> <p>How do you account for this change in engagement?</p> <p>Have you had students who have not increased engagement?</p> <p>Why not, do you think?</p>

Source Six: Student Interviews

Participants. At the end of the survey participants were invited to provide their contact details if they were interested in participating in a follow-up interview. Of the 22 participants, 13 provided these details and 12 were interviewed. There were five males and seven females, ranging in age from 16 to 19 years. Of the twelve, two had left

or were asked to leave the ReDY program, three had completed it then returned, and seven had completed it in the traditional way by staying for about twelve months and then transitioning to a mainstream school. This reflects the general pattern of the total cohort of 46 students who entered the program between 2010 and 2014, in that 70% completed it successfully and the remainder either left of their own accord or were asked to leave.

Consent. The final question on the survey (Appendix K) asked if the student wished to be contacted for an interview, and if so to leave their contact details. This allowed me to contact the students by email, text or Facebook chat to arrange a time and place for the interview. Prior to commencement, the students were given an information sheet and completed a consent form. If the student was under 17, a parent or carer also completed the consent form (see Appendix G).

Data collection. The interviews with students lasted 25–55 minutes. Students chose where they wanted to hold the interview (most chose a café). The interviews were, as described by Burgess (1988), ‘purposeful conversations’ and followed the core features of semi-structured interviews (Mason, 2002, p. 62). They had an ‘interactional exchange of dialogue’ (Mason, 2002, p. 62); the appearance of a conversation; a narrative approach where the conversation centred around the student stories, and an understanding on my part that the knowledge gained was constructed in the context of the exchange.

While the interviews ran like conversations, the structure that guided the questions was influenced by Blank’s (1978) four levels of questioning which take the interviewee from simple recall through to hypothesising:

- matching perception: reporting and responding to salient information

- selective analysis of perception: reporting and responding to details and less salient cues
- reordering perception: using language to restructure the perception of materials
- reasoning about perception: using language to predict, reason and problem solve.

Examples of the interview questions, coded by each dimension of engagement, can be found in Tables 9 through 11.

Analysis. Interviews were transcribed and uploaded to the NVivo software program. Consistent with other researchers' use of content analysis of interviews (Cohen, 2007), the comments were first coded under predetermined codes, under the dimensions of cognitive, affective and behavioural engagement, and their indicators: perceptions of competency, willingness to engage, establishment of goals, conduct, attendance, participation, homework, enjoyment, valuing of school, interest, and, sense of belonging. These sections of transcript were then recoded to reveal conceptual themes that allowed more understanding of the experiences and perceptions of the students in relation to their engagement with education (Creswell, 2013).

Table 11

Student interview questions: cognitive engagement

Questioning level	Interview Questions
Level 1	Was schoolwork easy for you at high school?
Level 2	How was the ReDY program different to mainstream high school?— Teaching? Learning? Structure? Expectations? What were you like as a student at the ReDY program, compared with before the program? Do you think that you were a different student in mainstream school before compared with after the ReDY program? Why?
Level 3	Why do you think the ReDY program worked (did not work) for you? How important was the individual learning?
Level 4	How do you think school would have been different for you if you had not gone to the ReDY program? Re-rate cognitive goal(s)

Note: questions based on Marion Blank's questioning levels

Table 12

Student interview questions: affective engagement

Questioning Levels	Interview Questions
Level 1	Can you tell me about your home life at that time? Can you tell me a positive experience from primary school? Was school a good place for you then?
Level 2	Was school a better or worse place to go to at the ReDY program? Did the teachers treat you differently after the ReDY program? What was (mainstream schooling) like compared with the ReDY program? What did you enjoy about mainstream school compared with the ReDY program? Can you describe the time when you left the ReDY program? Where did you go to? What was it like? Did you feel different in any way?
Level 3	Was the ReDY program a good place for you to have gone? Why? How important was case management?
Level 4	Did the ReDY program help you deal with your emotions? Explain. Re-rate affective goal(s)
Note: questions based on Marion Blank's questioning levels	

Table 13

Student interview questions: behavioural engagement

Questioning Levels	Interview Questions
Level 1	<p>What did you do with your friends at high school? On the weekends?</p> <p>Did you ever get a detention or suspension at school? Can you explain how that happened?</p> <p>How would you describe yourself as a student at school? (before the ReDY program)</p> <p>Can you tell me a memory of you and a teacher at school?</p>
Level 2	Can you describe an experience with a staff member at the ReDY program?
Level 3	<p>How important was the food/fitness/recreation program?</p> <p>Can you describe the presentation evening?... how was your experience?</p>
Level 4	<p>Who would the ReDY program not work for?</p> <p>Did going to the ReDY program give you any strategies at dealing with your home life? Explain.</p> <p>Re-rate behavioural goal(s)</p>
Note: questions based on Marion Blank's questioning levels	

Chapter 4: Results

This results chapter is organised by data type collected from students and staff in the Reengagement for Disengaged Youth (ReDY) Program: Section 1 addresses the quantitative data, and Section 2 examines the qualitative data. As well as being organised by quantitative and qualitative data sets, all data sources were sorted temporally: before the program, within the program, and after the program. As outlined in Table 4, some data sources were only collected once, some twice; for some sources, such as the interviews, there were three data collection points.

All data were coded into the three dimensions of engagement used in this study, those being cognitive, affective and behavioural. How engagement was conceptualised from the data sets involved an analysis of indicators that were assumed to relate to different dimensions of engagement. Table 14 outlines the dimension of engagement and the associated general indicators that could be ascertained from one or more of the data sets.

Section One: Quantitative Data

The different dimensions of engagement, the indicators of engagement within each of the dimension, as well as the data sources are outlined in Table 14.

Table 14

Grid of engagement indicators by data source (quantitative data)

Dimension of engagement	<u>Indicator of engagement</u>	<u>Data Source</u>			
		Survey	School data	School reports	Goal rating
Cognitive	Perception of competency	X	X	X	X
	Willingness to engage with classroom tasks			X	X
	Establishment of task-oriented and learning goals			X	X
	Enjoyment of school	X		X	X
	Sense of belonging			X	
Affective	Attitude towards school			X	X
	Interest in schoolwork			X	
	Value of education			X	
	Conduct	X		X	X
Behavioural	Homework completion			X	X
	Participation			X	X
	Attendance	X	X	X	X

Note: X denotes source of quantitative data where engagement indicator was found.

In order to ascertain whether change had occurred within each of the three dimensions of engagement, the quantitative data sets were compared by time. The comparison was between scores and ratings before the students entered the program and both during and after the program. Independent t-tests or chi-square tests χ^2 were used as the method of statistical analysis.

Source One: Student Survey

Of the 46 students aged from 12 to 15 years who attended the ReDY program, 21 (45%) participated in the survey, 12 (26%) were contacted but did not participate, and

13 (28%) were not contactable. Of the 21 respondents, 11 were female and eight were male; and two did not identify themselves.

The survey contained 17 items. Nine of the items asked students to compare a statement before, during and after their participation in the ReDY program. For these ‘comparison’ questions, the students had to rate themselves on a 10 point Likert Scale, with 0 representing ‘a major problem in my life’, and 10 representing ‘no problem in my life’. There were seven questions that asked students to rate their level of agreement with a particular statement. These ‘rating’ questions placed the extreme negative rated at 0 (never, not true, disagree), and the extreme positive rated at 10 (always, true, agree). The final question asked students to complete information on a table describing their activity since leaving the program. The full survey can be viewed in Appendix K.

It was identified that the majority of students demonstrated significant change in engagement from before the ReDY program to after the program and returning to their mainstream classroom. This improvement was identified in each of the three dimensions of engagement; cognitive, affective and behavioural. This is reported below.

Cognitive engagement indicators.

Comparison questions. Cognitive engagement was measured using the question ‘Did you find doing schoolwork easy?’ The results can be found in Table 15 and Figure 2, which identify means and standard deviations by the three data collection points, before, during and after the program. There was a significant difference between students’ ratings of before and during the program $t(1,14) = 5.4, p = .001$ and of before and after the program $t(1,14) = 5.90, p = .001$. There was no significant difference in how students rated ‘finding schoolwork easy’ during and after the program $t(1,14) = 0.40, p = .695$.

Table 15

Cognitive engagement: ease of schoolwork (N = 15)

Survey item	Before Program		During Program		After Program	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Did you find doing schoolwork easy?	3.8	3.1	8.3	1.7	8.1	1.3

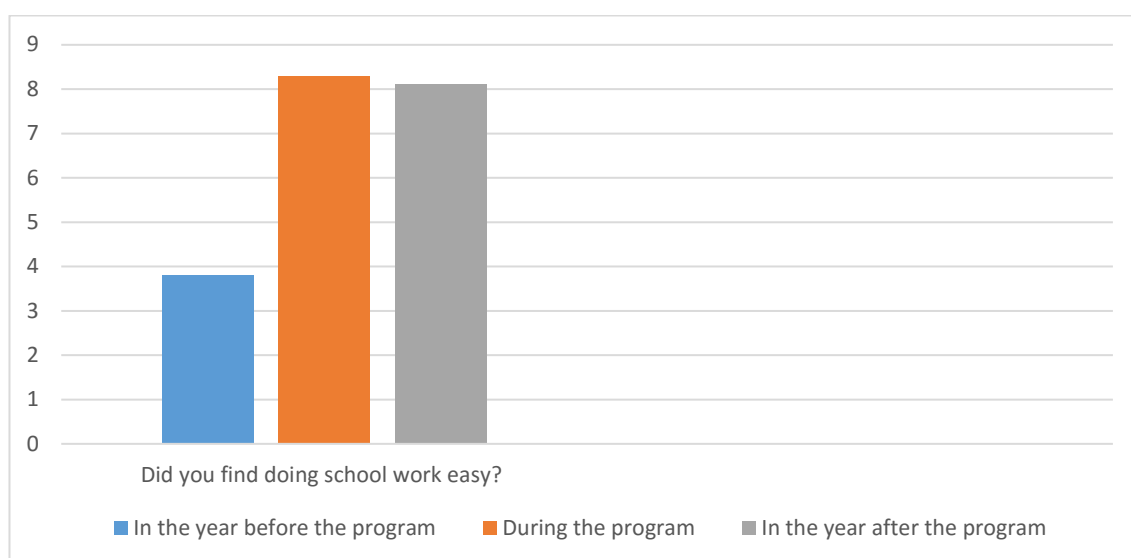


Figure 2 Graph of cognitive engagement by means: before, during and after the program.

Rating Statements. The students' responses to the three cognitive rating statements demonstrated a high level of agreement to the positively worded statement. The means and standard deviations for these ratings are reported in Table 16. In this study rating scores above seven were considered high, scores from seven to five were considered moderate, and scores less than four were considered low.

Table 16

Means and standard deviations for the three cognitive engagement rating statements

Survey item	Mean	SD
How important do you think coming to the ReDY program was for your future?	7.7	0.3
Because I went to the ReDY program, I stayed at school longer	7.2	3.4
Because I went to the ReDY program, I was better at schoolwork	7.4	2.9

Note: measured on a 10 point scale; N = 15

Affective engagement indicators.

Comparison questions. The four survey questions on ‘managing anger’, ‘enjoying school’, ‘managing anxiety’, and ‘school is a good place’ were coded as indicating students’ affective engagement. The means and standard deviations for these four questions are reported in Table 17 and Figure 3.

There was a significant difference between students’ ratings of ‘managing anger’ before and during the program $t(1,16) = 3.8, p = .002$. There was no significant difference between the ratings before and after the program $t(1,15) = 2.8, p = .14$. Similarly, there was no significant difference in how students rated ‘managing anger’ during and after the program $t(1,16) = 1.2, p = .264$.

There was a significant difference between students’ ratings of ‘enjoyment of school’ before and during the program $t(1,12) = 2.7, p = .018$. Similarly, there was a significant difference between students’ ratings of ‘enjoyment of school’ before and after the program $t(1,11) = 2.4, p = .038$. There was no significant difference in how students rated ‘enjoyment of school’ during after the program $t(1,13) = 0.59, p = .564$.

There was a significant difference between students’ ratings of ‘managing anxiety’ before and during the program $t(1,12) = 4.5, p = .001$. Similarly, there was a significant difference between their ratings before and after the program $t(1,11) = 0.4, p$

= .005. There was no significant difference in how they rated ‘managing anxiety’ before and after the program $t(1,12) = 0.9$, $p = .386$.

There was significant difference between student ratings of ‘school is a good place’ before and during the program $t(1,13) = 3.7$, $p = .002$. Similarly, there was a significant difference between ratings before the program and after the program $t(1,12) = 3.4$, $p = .005$. There was no significant difference in how students rated ‘school is a good place’ during and after the program $t(1,13) = .91$, $p = .378$.

Table 17

Means and stand deviations before, during and after the program for the four affective engagement questions

Survey Items	<u>Before Program</u>		<u>During Program</u>		<u>After Program</u>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Was managing anger a problem for you?	5.4	3.5	7.3	3.1	7.4	2.9
Did you enjoy your time at high school?	4.3	2.9	7.2	2.0	7.5	2.4
Was managing anxiety a problem for you?	3.4	3.7	6.5	2.5	7.2	2.8
Would you say that school was a good place to be?	4.5	2.9	7.6	2.4	6.6	3.1

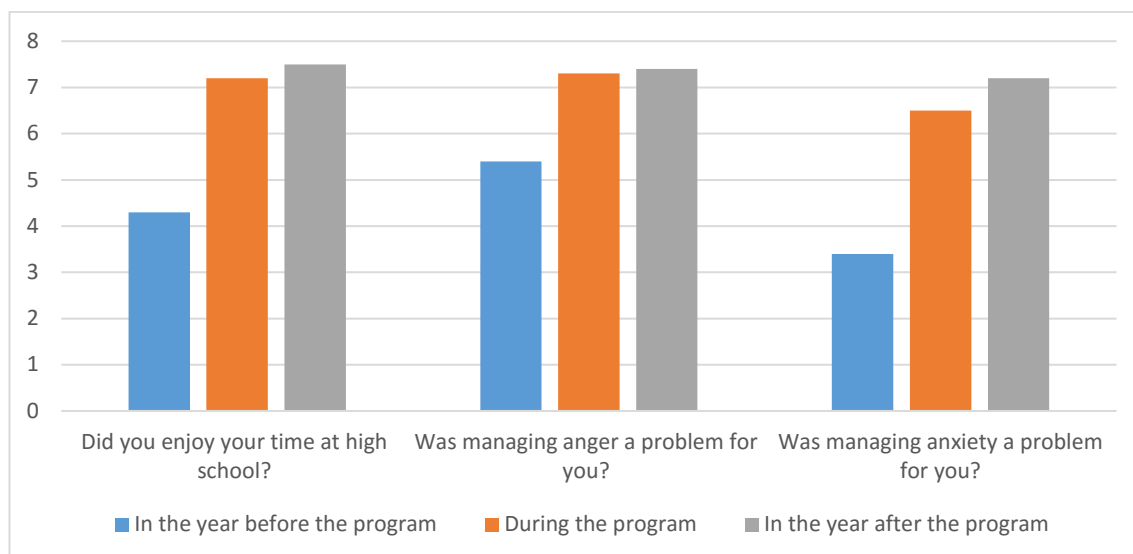


Figure 3 Graph of affective engagement by means: before, during and after the program

Rating Statements. The students' responses to the two affective rating statements demonstrated a high level of agreement to the positively worded statement. The means and standard deviations for these statements are reported in Table 18.

Table 18

Means and standard deviations for the two affective engagement rating statements

Rating statement	Mean	SD
Because I went to the ReDY program, I was healthier	7.5	2.6
Because I went to the ReDY program, I was better at dealing with my emotions	6.9	2.8

Note: on a 10 point scale, N = 15

Behavioural engagement indicators.

Comparison questions. The three survey questions on how students 'got along with' peers, family and teachers were coded as indicating students' behavioural

engagement. The means and standard deviations for these three questions are reported in Table 19 and Figure 4.

There was no significant difference in the students' ratings on the item 'getting along with peers' before the program and during the program $t(1,15) = 1.9$, $p = 0.77$, or before and after the program $t(1,14) = .69$, $p = .503$. Nor was there a significant difference in this rating during the program and after the program $t(1,14) = 1.2$, $p = .267$.

There was a significant difference between students' ratings of 'family life' before and during the program $t(1,13) = 3.1$, $p = .008$, and also before and after the program $t(1,12) = 3.4$, $p = .006$. There was no significant difference to how they rated 'family life' during and after the program $t(1,14) = 4.1$, $p = .685$.

There was a significant difference between students' ratings of 'getting on with teachers' before and during the program $t(1,13) = 5.3$, $p = .000$, and again before and after the program $t(1,12) = 4.6$, $p = .001$. There was also a significant difference in how students rated 'getting on with teachers' during and after the program $t(1,14) = 3.2$, $p = .006$.

Table 19

Means and standard deviations for before, during and after the program for the three behavioural engagement survey questions

Survey Questions	<u>Before Program</u>		<u>During Program</u>		<u>After Program</u>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
How did you get along with your peers?	5.1	3.1	6.9	2.5	6.2	3.3
How was your family life?	5.1	3.1	6.7	2.3	6.8	2.7
How well did you get on with your teachers?	4.7	3.0	7.9	2.4	7.5	1.8

Rating Statements. The students' responses to the three behavioural rating statements demonstrated a high level of agreement to the positively worded statement. The means and standard deviations for these rating statements are reported in Table 20.

Table 20

Means and standard deviations for the three behavioural engagement rating statements

Rating statements	Mean	SD
If I didn't go to the ReDY program, I would be doing different things now	7.3	3.1
Because I went to the ReDY program, I stayed at school longer	7.2	3.4
Because I went to the ReDY program, I was better at being with people	6.5	3.0

Note: on a 10 point scale, N = 15)

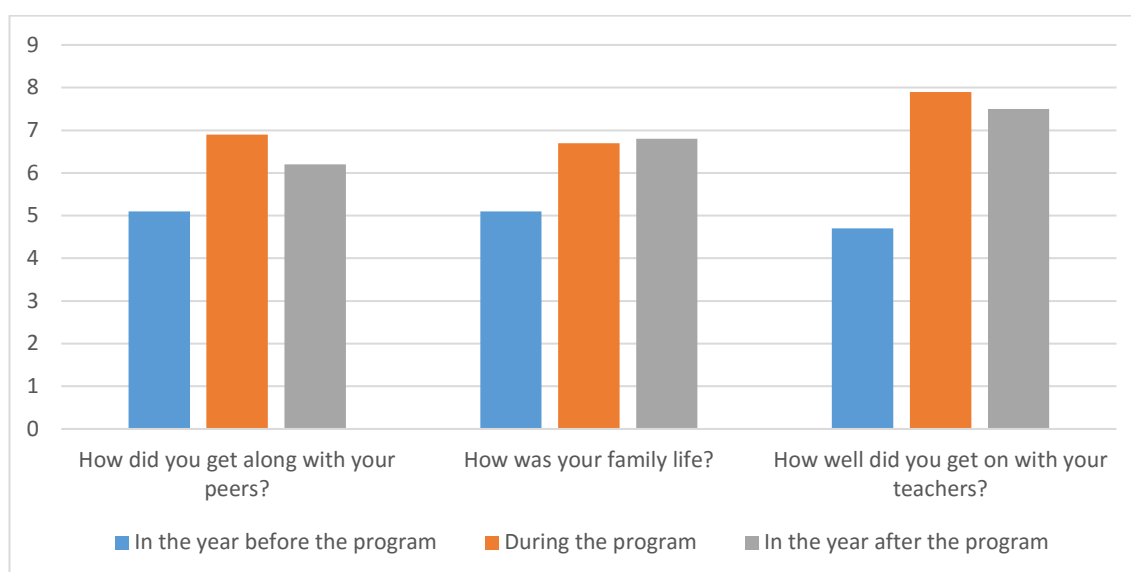


Figure 4 Graph of behavioural engagement by means: before, during and after the program.

Information Table. As shown in Table 21, the survey results demonstrated that 85% of students who responded were in full-time work or study one year after leaving

the program, 93% were in full time work or study two years after leaving the program, and 90% of those who had been out for three years were still in school, work or training.

Table 21

Survey results for 'what best describes what you did in the years after you left the program?'

	School/ College	TAFE or University	Full time work	Part time work	Looking for work	Other	Total
In the first few months after the program	14 (66%)		1 (5%)	3 (14%)	2 (10%)	1 (5%)	21 (100%)
The year after you left	14 (70%)	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	1(5%)	2 (10%)		20 (100%)
The second year after you left	10 (66%)		2 (13%)	2 (13%)	1 (7%)		15 (100%)
The third year after you left	2 (20%)	2 (20%)	5 (50%)		1 (10%)		10 (100%)

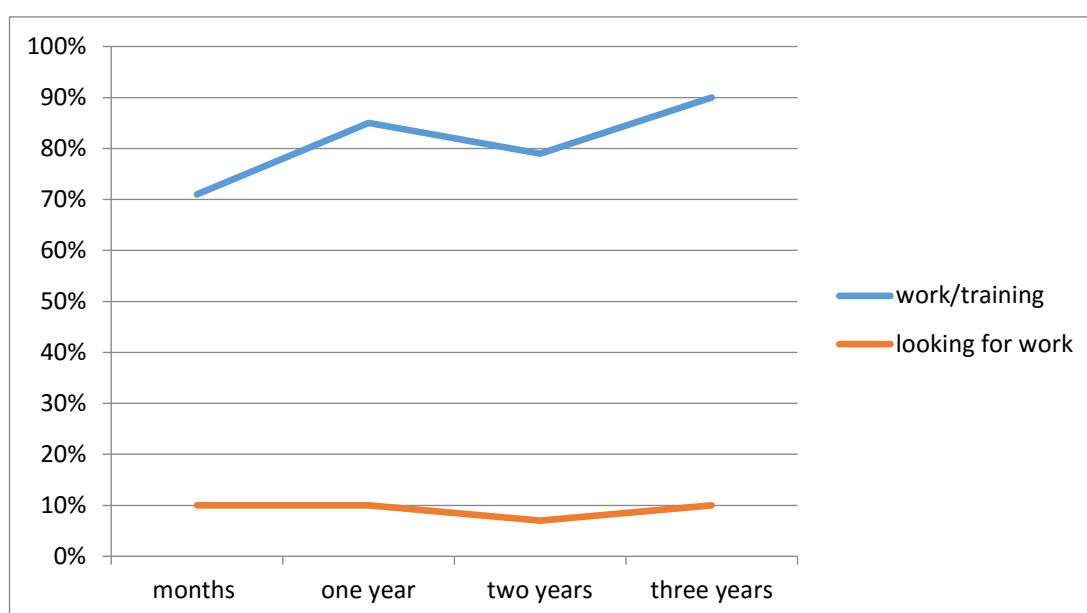


Figure 5 Graph showing percentage of students in full time work/training compared with those looking for work, over time since leaving the program.

Source Two: School Data

Students' school data were gathered from the host school.

Standardised tests. In terms of standardised tests, the main measures were from the Progressive Assessment Tests (PAT) (ACER, 2009–2014) in English and numeracy achievement. These data were collected twice: once before the students entered the program, and again one year later, which was some time after they had commenced the program. The length of time before the second test depended on the time when the student entered the program, as the PAT tests are conducted in the same month each year. PAT data were available for 17 of the students who were located in the host school. Table 22 shows the students' literacy and numeracy progressive assessment tests scores, achieved before and after commencement of the program.

There was a significant difference between students' achievement in PAT literacy before entry into the program and after commencement $t(1,16) = 3.1, p = .006$.

Similarly, there was a significant difference between students' achievement in PAT numeracy before and after commencement of the program $t(1,16) = 3.9, p = .001$.

Table 22

Means and standard deviations for literacy and numeracy progressive assessment test scores, before, and after the program (N = 17)

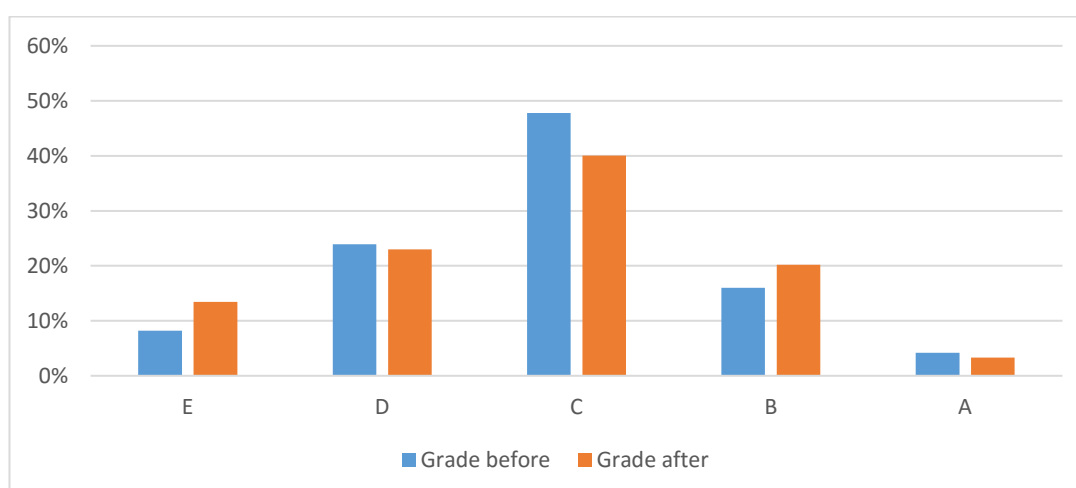
Progressive Assessment Tests	<u>Before entry</u>		<u>After entry</u>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Literacy	232.9	60.1	248.68	33.63
Numeracy	48.34	13.39	53.57	13.60

Report card grades. School report card achievement grades were calculated for students who attended the host school before entry to the program and returned to the host school afterwards (N = 12). These end-of-term reports are designed to provide information to parents on their child's school progress in relation to achievement standards. The grading standards went from well above standard (awarded an A), to well below standard (awarded an E) (see Table 23). Not all students studied the same number of subjects each semester, but typically they were involved with thirteen subjects in Years 7 and 8, and nine subjects in Years 9 and 10. In each subject, students were assessed on six criteria. The total number of grades awarded across all criteria, in all subjects, for all 12 students, was 770. The total number of teacher grades awarded was tallied for each student before they entered the program, and then again when they returned to the host school. These raw scores were then calculated as percentages of the total number of teacher awarded grades given to all students, in all subjects, at that time. As reported in Table 4.10, there was little change in grades awarded before the program compared with after, despite students being absent from mainstream school for over 12 months. Before the program, 68% of the students were achieving at, or above, the expected year level standard, that is, at or above, a C grade (grades A, B and C). There was a 5% reduction of students' achieving at or above the expected year level standards after the program to 63%. Before the program 32% of the students in the program were achieving below, or well below the expected year level standard (grades D and E). There was a 4% increase to 36% below expected year level standard after the program. Critically, the profile of grades awarded suggests that there was no detrimental effect on students' grade achievement by participating in the program. An example of a host school report card can be viewed in Appendix M.

Table 23

Student grade achievement pre- and post-program

School Grade	<u>Before program</u>		<u>After program</u>	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
A = Signifies that the student is achieving well above the expected year level	32	4%	20	3%
B = Signifies that the student is achieving above the expected year level	123	16%	123	20%
C = Signifies that the student is achieving at the expected year level	368	48%	244	40%
D = Signifies that the student is achieving below the expected year level	184	24%	140	23%
E = Signifies that the student is achieving well below the expected year level	63	8%	82	13%
Total (N students=12)	770	100%	609	100%

*Figure 6 Teacher-awarded school report grades achievement before and after program.*

Behavioural engagement indicators.

Attendance. Student attendance was recorded as the number of days the student attended school as a percentage of the number of compulsory school days for the year. The students' before-, during- and after-attendance data are summarised in Table 24. A series of independent paired t-tests was conducted to determine whether there was any significant difference in students' attendance rates, and significant difference was found from before the program to during the program $t(1,38) = 7.1, p = .000$. There was also a significant difference between before and after the program $t(1,10) = 3.3, p = .008$, and again between during and after the program $t(1,9) = 3.1, p = .013$. Of note was the maintenance of high attendance rates after students returned to the host school, when the supports provided in the program were no longer available.

Table 24

Means and standard deviations for students' attendance rates

<u>Before Program</u>		<u>During Program</u>		<u>After Program</u>	
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
74.75%	21.61%	95.0%	5.24%	93.73%	6.75%

Note: before (N = 39), during (N = 39) and after program (N = 11)

Source Three: Host School Report Cards

School reports contained data written by classroom and pastoral teachers about the students in the study. Reports for all students who attended the host school before the program (N = 46) were available, but only those of students who returned to the host school were used for comparison (N = 12). The school reports contained ratings by teachers on student 'work ethic' and their 'respect' in class, as well as comments written by each teacher. Each report contained between 9 and 14 separate subjects, written by individual teachers. The reports were used from the year before and the year after the

students' enrolment in the program and, where possible, used the midyear report as it contained individual subject comments (term 1 and 4 reports only supplied ratings). Examples of students' school reports are shown in Appendix M. It should be noted that the reports written before the program were by a different set of teachers than those after, depending on the subjects that the students enrolled in and the teachers allocated to those classes.

The comments written by teachers were coded into cognitive, affective and behavioural comments using the method explained in Chapter 3 (see Table 9). These comments were further coded into the indicators of engagement within each dimension (see Table 3). For each indicator of engagement, the comments were sorted as either positive (for example, comments congratulating or encouraging student behaviour) or negative (for example, comments criticising or suggesting change to existing student behaviour). The result of sorting these comments demonstrated a consistent pattern of a decrease in negative teachers' comments, and an increase in positive comments, after the ReDY program.

Work ethic ratings were given by teachers on each student's subject reports. The ratings were an average of three separate criteria rated from 'excellent' to 'unsatisfactory' on comments such as 'arrives punctually and is prepared for class', 'engages in and contributes to class work', and 'completes set work and meets deadlines'.

Cognitive engagement indicators.

Teachers' comments on school reports. Teachers' comments relating to students' cognitive engagement were coded into the following indicators: perception of competency (N = 80), willingness to engage with classroom tasks (N = 106), and establishment of task-oriented and learning goals (N = 29). Table 25 reports that the

difference in positive and negative cognitive teacher comments before and after the program was significant (Chi squared $\chi^2 = 35.9$, $p = .0001$), and that there was significant difference found in the indicators of perception of competency (Chi squared $\chi^2 = 8.46$, $p = .0036$), and willingness to engage with classroom tasks (Chi squared $\chi^2 = 28.8$, $p = .0001$), but not in the indicator of establishment of task-oriented and learning goals (Chi squared $\chi^2 = .545$, $p = .4603$).

Table 25

Type and number of comments on school reports: cognitive engagement indicators

Statements	<u>Negative comments</u>		<u>Positive comments</u>	
	Before program	After program	Before program	After program
Perception of competency	27	14	13	26
Willingness to engage with classroom tasks	34	26	3	43
Establishing goals	18	10	1	0
Total cognitive comments	79	50	17	69

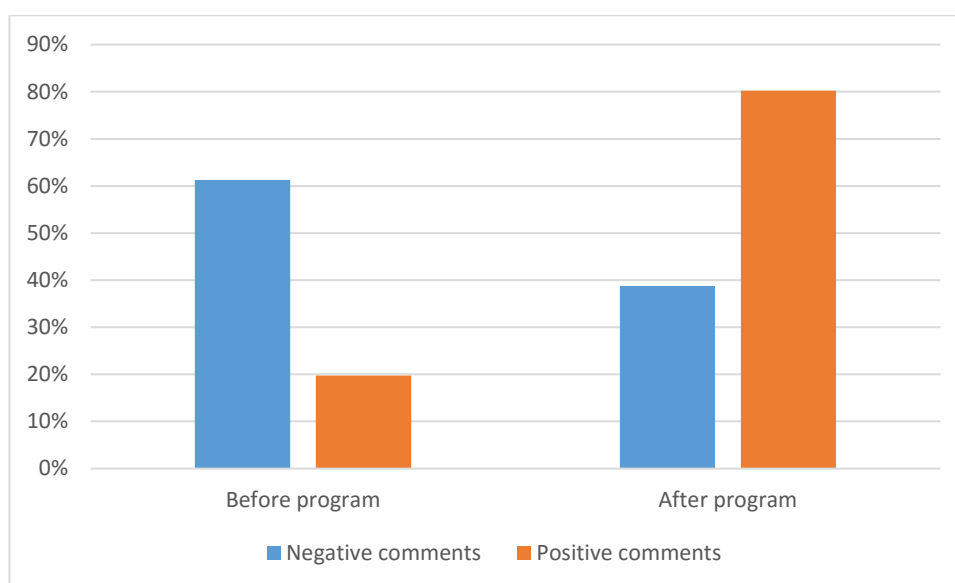


Figure 7 Percentage of positive and negative teacher comments relating to cognitive engagement on host school reports of students before and after the program.

Teachers' ratings of students' work ethic. On the students' school report cards, the host school's teachers provided a rating on 'work ethic'. This judgement was arrived at by considering three criteria: the student 'arrives punctually and is prepared for class', 'engages in and contributes to class work', and, 'completes set work and meets deadlines'. Before entry to the program, 22% of the students were above satisfactory standard on this teacher judgement (excellent or good), and this increased to 47% after the program (see Table 26). Before the program 36% of the cohort were rated by their teachers as having a poor work ethic (fair or unsatisfactory), and this decreased to 25% after the program.

Table 26

Teachers' ratings of students' work ethic before and after the program

Rating	<u>Before program</u>		<u>After program</u>	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Excellent	15	4%	45	11%
Good	71	18%	148	36%
Satisfactory	167	42%	116	28%
Fair/Unsatisfactory	143	36%	104	25%
Total (N = 12)	396	100%	413	100%

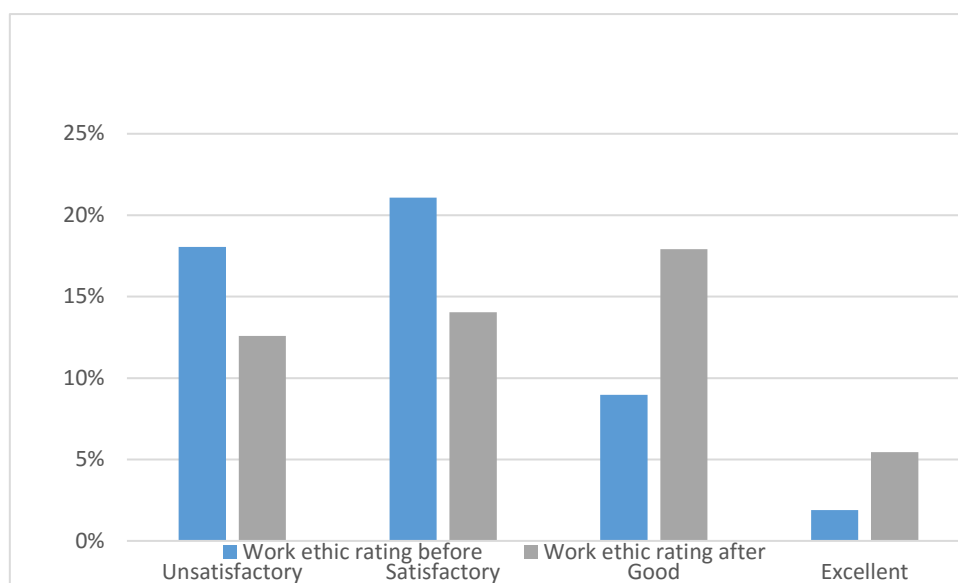


Figure 8 Teachers' rating of students' work ethic rating before and after the program.

Affective engagement indicators. Host school teachers' comments relating to students' affective engagement were coded based on five elements: enjoyment of school, interest in schoolwork, sense of belonging, attitude towards school, and, valuing of education. A comparison by number of positive and negative teacher comments before the program with after the program shows that the difference in positive and negative affective comments before and after the program was significant (Chi squared $\chi^2 = 5.29$, $p = .0215$), although there was no significant difference in the indicators of 'enjoyment' (Chi squared $\chi^2 = 1.32$, $p = .250$), 'interest in schoolwork' (Chi squared $\chi^2 = .048$, $p = .0827$), 'sense of belonging' (Chi squared $\chi^2 = 1.43$, $p = .2308$) or 'value of education' (Chi squared $\chi^2 = .444$, $p = .505$). A significant difference for the indicator 'attitude towards school' was identified (Chi squared $\chi^2 = 6.90$, $p = .0086$).

Table 27

Type and number of comments on school reports: affective engagement indicators

Comments	<u>Negative comments</u>		<u>Positive comments</u>	
	Before program	After program	Before program	After program
Enjoyment of school	1	0	4	6
Value of education	0	1	1	2
Interest in schoolwork	1	3	3	12
Sense of belonging	1	0	5	8
Attitude towards school	6	2	5	17
Total affective comments	9	6	18	45

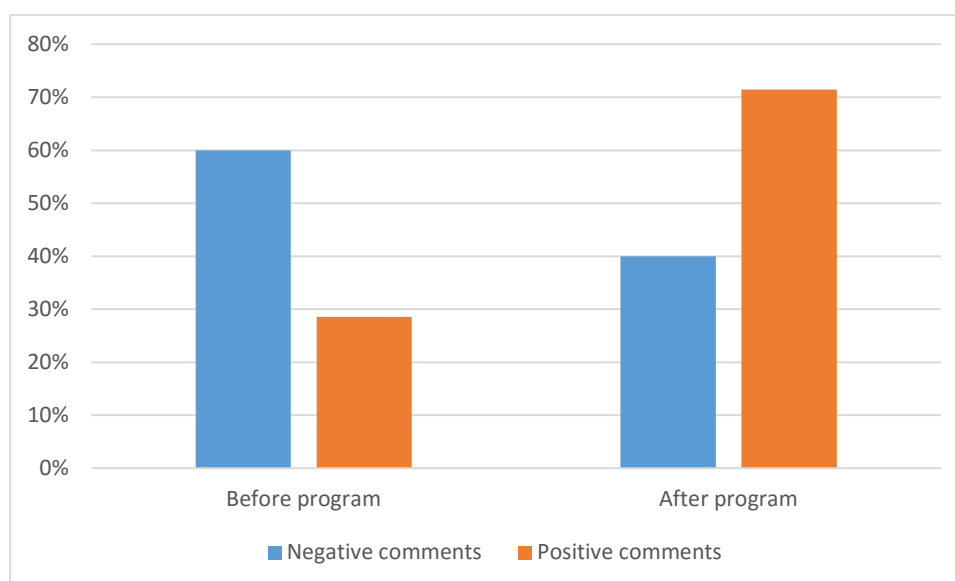


Figure 9 Percentage of positive and negative teacher comments relating to affective engagement as seen on host school student reports before the program compared with after.

Behavioural engagement indicators. Teachers' comments relating to students' behavioural engagement were coded into the following indicators: conduct (N = 53), attendance (N = 27), participation (N = 71), and homework completion (N = 17). In addition, teachers rated the students on the criteria 'treats others with respect' with a possible ratings of 'excellent', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'unsatisfactory'. As explained in Chapter 3, the number of ratings at each level was tallied, and then calculated as a percentage of the total number of ratings for 'treats others with respect' given before the students entered the program. The same method was used to find the percentage of each rating after the students returned to the host school.

Table 28 shows that the difference in positive and negative behavioural comments, before and after the program was significant (Chi squared $\chi^2 = 37.6$, $p = .0001$), and that there was significant difference identified in each individual indicator of behavioural engagement: Conduct (Chi squared $\chi^2 = 11.9$, $p = .0006$), attendance (Chi squared $\chi^2 = 7.57$, $p = .0059$), participation (Chi squared $\chi^2 = 9.46$, $p = .0021$), and homework completion (Chi squared $\chi^2 = 4.16$, $p = .0415$).

Table 28
Number of comments on school reports: behavioural engagement indicators

Comments	<u>Negative comments</u>		<u>Positive comments</u>	
	Before program	After program	Before program	After program
Conduct	19	8	6	20
Homework completion	11	4	0	2
Participation	19	11	11	30
Attendance	20	1	3	3
Total behavioural comments	69	24	20	55

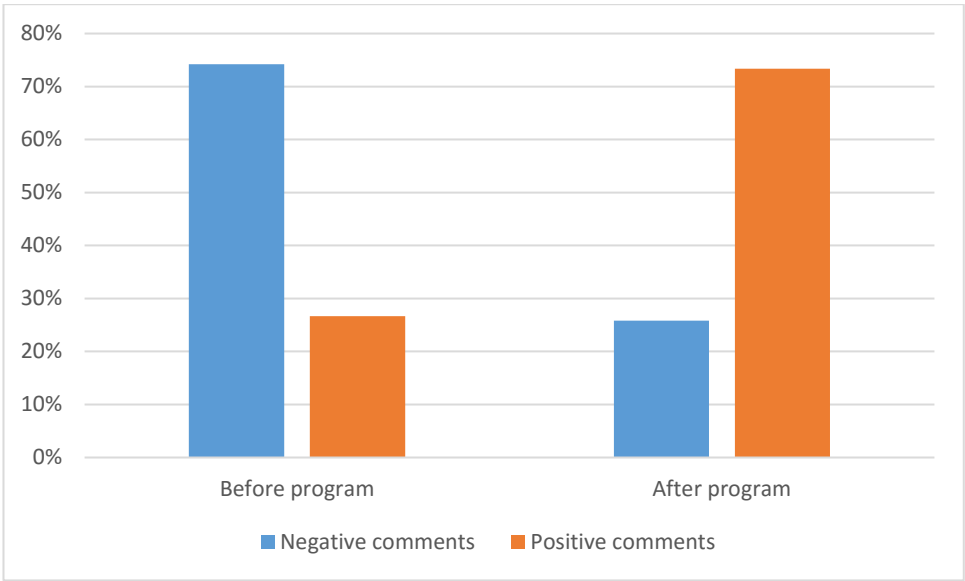


Figure 10 Percentage of positive and negative teacher comments relating to behavioural engagement as seen on host school student reports before and after the program.

Before the program 51% of the ‘treats others with respect’ ratings were above satisfactory standard (excellent or good); this increased to 66% after the program, with a particular increase in the ‘excellent’ rating from 12% to 33%. Before the program 11% of the cohort were rated as having a below-satisfactory ‘treats others with respect’ rating (fair or unsatisfactory); this increased slightly to 13% after the program.

Table 29

Frequency of ‘treats others with respect’ ratings, before and after program

Rating	<u>Before program</u>		<u>After program</u>	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Excellent	17	12%	42	33%
Good	54	39%	41	33%
Satisfactory	53	38%	27	21%
Fair/Unsatisfactory	15	11%	16	13%
Total	139	100%	126	100%

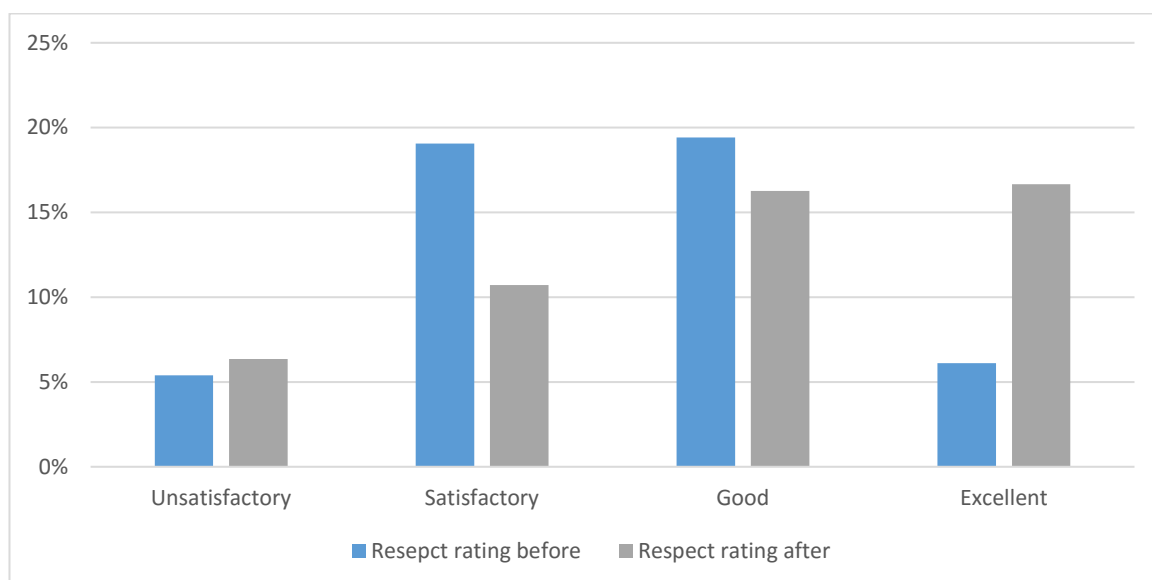


Figure 11 Ratings of ‘treats others with respect’ from school reports given by class teachers before entry to the program and on the first complete report after the program.

Source Four: Reengagement Program Reports

Student self-ratings of achievement in personal goals. When students entered the program, they self-identified between three and nine personal goals that they wanted to work towards. Achieving these personal goals formed the basis of each student’s learning plan, as well as framing conversations between staff and individual students on ways to achieve these goals. When their personal goals were first identified, students were asked to rate their performance (achievement) on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0

represented ‘a major problem in my life’ and 10 represented ‘no problem in my life’. Students re-rated these personal goals and their level of achievement in reaching that goal every term (each term was between 10 and 12 weeks in length). For the purpose of this study, each of the personal goals was coded into one of the three dimensions of engagement, cognitive, affective, or behavioural, and again into the specific indicators for each dimension outlined in Table 14.

On a 10 point rating scale, at entry to the program, the majority of students’ self-ratings were between 0 and 4, but at the end of the program the majority were between 7 and 10. While it was expected that students rated their goals at the low end of the scale at entry to the ReDY program (they would not have been set as goals if the students perceived them to be ‘no problem’), that students, on average, rated their goals on the high end of the scale when they left is an important finding. These self-assessed ‘final ratings’ were sourced from all students, including those who did not complete the program and those who did not return to the host school.

Cognitive engagement indicators. Goals related to cognitive engagement were coded into the three following indicators: perceptions of competency, willingness to engage in classroom tasks and establishment of task-oriented and learning goals. As illustrated in Table 30, there was a significant difference in students’ goal ratings in each of these three indicators from the start to the end of the program: ‘perception of competency’ $t(1,30) = 42, p = .000$; ‘willingness to engage in classroom tasks’ $t(1,8) = 11, p = .000$; and, ‘establishment of task-oriented and learning goals’ $t(1,14) = 21, p = .000$. The combination of the three cognitive goals also demonstrated a significant

improvement from entry to the program were compared with all final ratings $t(1,54) = 22$, $p = .000$.

Table 30

Comparison of students' goal ratings of cognitive engagement indicators at entry and at end of the ReDY program

Rating Questions	N	Rating at Entry to Program		Final Rating	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Perception of competency	31	3.3	1.8	8.3	1.5
Willingness to engage with classroom tasks	9	4.0	1.8	9.0	.71
Establishment of task-oriented and learning goals	15	3.8	1.7	8.3	1.5
All cognitive goals	55	3.6	1.9	8.4	1.4

Affective engagement indicators. All the students' personal goals related to affective engagement were coded into the indicator of school enjoyment ($N = 53$).

There was a significant difference in students' goal ratings at entry to the program compared with their final ratings $t(1,48) = 53$, $p = .000$.

Table 31

Comparison of students' goal ratings of affective engagement indicators at entry and the end of the program

Question	N	Rating at entry		Final Rating	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Enjoyment of school	53	3.8	1.6	8.4	1.6

Behavioural engagement indicators. Goals relating to behavioural engagement were coded into the indicators of student attendance ($N = 13$), conduct ($N = 53$), and participation ($N = 6$).

As demonstrated in Table 32, the mean of all goal ratings related to behavioural engagement at the entry to the program was calculated and compared with the mean for the final ratings given by students before they left the program. There was a significant difference in average student goal ratings, coded as 'behavioural engagement' at entry to the program, compared with the final ratings $t(1,61) = 29, p = .000$. Each of the three indicators of behavioural engagement also demonstrated significant change. There was a significant difference in goal ratings coded as 'attendance' between entry and final ratings $t(1,12) = 24, p = .000$. Similarly, there was a significant difference in students' goal ratings coded as 'conduct' between entry and final ratings $t(1,43) = 70, p = .000$. Finally, there was a significant difference in students' goal ratings, coded as 'participation', between entry and final ratings $t(1,5) = 20, p = .000$.

Table 32

Comparison of students' goal ratings of behavioural engagement indicators at the entry and at end of the program

Behaviours	N	Rating at entry to Program		<u>Final Rating</u>	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Attendance	13	2.6	1.8	9.0	1.6
Conduct	53	2.7	1.6	8.5	1.3
Participation	6	3.2	1.9	7.5	1.6
All behavioural goals	72	2.9	1.8	8.6	1.4

Summary of Quantitative Findings

The results from the quantitative data demonstrate student change across all three dimensions of cognitive, affective, and behavioural engagement from the start of the ReDY program to after the program. These data consisted of survey responses, attendance and achievement data, report cards with teachers' comments and ratings, and students' personal goal data. Key findings as they relate to students' level of engagement across the cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions are listed below.

Cognitive dimension.

- Quantitative results demonstrated positive change in each of the three indicators of cognitive engagement: perception of competency, willingness to engage in classroom tasks, and the establishment of task-oriented and learning goals.
- Students perceived that their schoolwork was easier when they returned to mainstream schooling than before they entered the ReDY program. They showed greater achievement on standardised tests, and reported that they achieved more because they went to the program.

- There was no statistically significant change in grade achievement from before entry to the program compared with after they returned to the host school. This suggests that although the students were engaged in an alternative, individually tailored program of study, attending the ReDY program did not have an impact on their grades when they returned to their regular program of study.
- Host school teachers' ratings of students' 'work ethic' in the host school significantly increased after students returned to the mainstream campus, compared with their reported levels of 'work ethic' before students entered the ReDY program.
- The ratings of personal goals that each student set at entry to the ReDY program increased significantly by the time the student ended the program.
- Host school teachers wrote more positive comments on school reports about the establishment of students' task-oriented and learning goals, and fewer negative comments, after the ReDY program.

Affective dimension.

- Quantitative results demonstrated positive change in each of the three indicators of affective engagement: enjoyment of school, interest in schoolwork, and value of education.
- Host school teachers wrote more positive comments on school reports about students enjoying school, and fewer negative comments, after the ReDY program.
- On the survey, students reported a significant increase in the amount they enjoyed school during and after the ReDY program. They also reported that managing anger and anxiety was less of a problem after the program.

- The ratings of the goal ‘to enjoy school’ that students set themselves at entry to the ReDY program increased significantly by the time they left the program.

Behavioural dimension.

- Quantitative results demonstrated positive change in each of the four indicators of behavioural engagement: conduct, participation, attendance, and homework completion.
- Students’ attendance increased significantly during the ReDY program. This higher level of attendance was maintained when the students returned to the host school.
- Host school teachers’ ratings of respect increased significantly. More positive comments and fewer negative comments were written about student conduct and participation after the students returned to the mainstream.
- The ratings of goals relating to behaviour that students set themselves at entry to the ReDY program increased significantly by the time they left the program.

Section Two: Qualitative Data

The quantitative results presented above have provided information about the nature of engagement for a student cohort before, during and after enrolment in the ReDY program. The benefit of analysing the data quantitatively is to be able to start to answer the question of whether change in the three dimensions of engagement could be understood. Building from that point, analysis of the qualitative data has been used to gain an in-depth understanding of that change by examining the comments from teachers and students. As in Section 1 of this chapter, the qualitative data have been coded into various indicators within each dimension of engagement. Within each of

these coded sections, data have been arranged under emergent themes as outlined in Table 33.

Table 33

Engagement indicators by qualitative data source

Dimension of engagement	Indicator of engagement	<u>Data Source</u>			
		Program reports	School reports	Student interviews	Staff interviews
Cognitive	Perception of competency	X	X	X	X
	Willingness to engage with classroom tasks	X	X	X	X
	Establishment of task-oriented and learning goals	X	X	X	X
Affective	Enjoyment of school	X	X	X	X
	Sense of belonging	X	X	X	X
	Attitude towards school	X	X	X	X
	Interest in schoolwork	X	X	X	X
	Value of education	X	X	X	X
Behavioural	Conduct	X	X	X	X
	Homework completion	X	X	X	X
	Participation	X	X	X	X
	Attendance	X	X	X	X

Note: X denotes source of qualitative data where engagement indicator was found.

Data were gathered from the comments written by teachers on host school reports, self-reflections by students from their time within the ReDY program, and interviews

held with 14 students who completed the ReDY program. These data were coded into predetermined categories by time: before students entered the ReDY program, their time within it, and, from the interviews, their time after leaving. The comments were further coded into the three dimensions of engagement: cognitive, affective and behavioural. Within each of the predetermined codes, themes emerged that highlighted either commonality or exceptionality for the cohort. These themes formed the main discussion points and led to the findings discussed in Chapter 5.

When reading the emergent themes from the qualitative results, it is worth considering that the sample technique has not produced an even representation of comments from before, during and after the ReDY program. Comments from before and during the program were gathered from all 46 students enrolled over the period 2010–2014. The comments from after the program derived from 14 interviews, and 12 school reports from those who had returned to the host school after completion. This means that the comments cannot be read as a complete story for all students.

In the qualitative analysis all comments were used, regardless of whether there was a comparison comment from the same student at a different time. This allowed a larger bank of themes to emerge, and allowed all 46 students to be represented in the analysis of these data even if they did not complete the ReDY program or participate in the interview. This enabled the researcher to go into more detail about the impact of the ReDY program on the students. The themes that emerged before the ReDY program represent all 46 students, whereas those that emerged after the program are compiled only from the 14 interviewees.

Cognitive Engagement

Cognitive engagement is the first of the three dimensions of engagement described by Fredricks et al. (2004). In this next section, the main source of data came

from the teachers' written comments on the students' school records and report cards as well as from the students' interview transcript data. These comments were coded into the indicators of cognitive engagement: perceptions of competency, willingness to engage with classroom tasks, and the establishment of task-oriented and learning goals. Within each of these data sets, themes have been identified which illustrate the change in students' engagement.

Perceptions of competency. When the school records and transcripts were analysed, two major themes emerged relating to how the students and their teachers perceived the students' competence. The first theme was how teacher and student perceptions of students' academic confidence differed, and the second theme was the consequences of missed work or gaps in knowledge.

Academic confidence. The first theme emerging from this indicator of cognitive engagement concerned the lack of confidence surrounding students' academic ability. There was a disparity between the perceptions of some teachers and students of the causes behind poor student achievement. Most teachers reported that the disengaging students had much greater academic ability than they were willing to demonstrate in class, whereas students saw their lack of achievement as due to a lack of ability or confidence. Tessa, for example, who was achieving at the lowest of the three achievement levels in her mainstream class, was seen to be 'capable of working at an intermediate level, but this will depend on her improving her current work ethic' (school report, 2009). Most of the students who were not doing well in their classes were seen not as lacking in ability but lacking in effort, and the clear message from their teachers in their school reports was that this, rather than a lack of competency, resulted in their low grades. Teachers commonly constructed these comments as a choice: unless students 'made a choice' to increase focus and effort, they would not receive the award

they were capable of. This implies that the students were considered competent enough to achieve.

Some students perceived their academic abilities differently. Jane, for example, said,

I thought that I was stupid. Full stop. I thought that I was not smart, at all, and that I'd be like that for my whole life. I thought that I was born to be bad at Science, and Math, and I was never going to be able to put in a good assignment, let alone have it in on time. (Self-reflection, 2014)

Jacqui also lacked confidence in her ability: 'I have a low confidence, when I have to read in front of people I get really scared I say to myself that I can't do this it's too hard' (Self-reflection, 2013); but her teachers reported this as unwillingness to engage: 'Jacqui will need to greatly improve her self-motivation, focus and application to future assessment tasks' (School Report, 2012). Bruce recounted that that his lack of ability and overall school experience affected him greatly: 'Before ReDY I could never go to school, I had no friends, I could never do my schoolwork or even get it correct when doing it' (Self-reflection, 2012). These are examples of an apparent disparity in explaining difficulty with schoolwork. Where on the whole students saw lack of ability or confidence, teachers saw a lack of effort.

The comments from students and interviews with the staff suggest that the increase in student academic confidence was initially fostered by the ReDY program staff, who explicitly designed tasks that were achievable for the students and which encouraged them to engage with their learning. As James (a program teacher) explained, 'once they start achieving a little bit of success, then the positive ball starts to roll. Once they start feeling better about it, they achieve more success and more success, and it just keeps on building on from there' (Staff Interview, 2015).

Mike recalls the moment that he started to believe that he could succeed academically:

I might have been there for a week or something and I'd just been going through the work and I had a test, maths or whatever and I went and talked to [program teacher] Emily and she's like 'you're going pretty well' and it was like, actually, I can kinda do this. (Interview, 2015)

The majority of students and program staff believed that realising academic success through effortful learning led to a greater perception of competence. For example, a tipping point for Charlene was the moment she realised that she could work at the level of English appropriate for her age. This opened her eyes to future possibilities: 'So like, I'm a lot more confident now with my study because I have so many options' (Interview, 2015). Suffering anxiety, Brigid needed to see that she was competent before she was willing to engage further:

I was just so scared to even put a pen to paper, like it's ridiculous and I thought I was pretty dumb, but then I went to ReDY and I actually could do all the things. It showed me that I was not dumb. (Interview, 2015)

For some students, change in their perception of competence came from achieving academically where previously this had seemed impossible. Mark, who had always struggled with maths, explained, 'I went from having to go back to foundations of maths until being able to do simultaneous equations and stuff' (Interview, 2015). Similarly, Bruce said that, 'during my twelve months in ReDY, I've moved from being really bad at maths to being at the top of my class in it' (Self-reflection, 2012). Mike attributed his increase in confidence to his change in attitude towards school: 'I think that ... wanting to be there, I think I finally took off when I realised that I was actually learning stuff and I didn't have to try super hard to learn' (Interview, 2015).

Some students attributed their new feelings of competence to the small class and the one-on-one help offered by the staff. As Paddy put it, ‘it is not as hard because the teacher explains it to me better than when I was in [host school]’ (Self-reflection, 2012). Most important for some students, however, was the feeling that the ReDY program offered a place where students felt it was safe to engage: ‘I felt like I could sit down and actually do work and I wouldn’t be harassed or judged’ (Interview, 2015).

Those students who were still at high school when they were interviewed post-program demonstrated a much higher sense of confidence: ‘I am going awesome! I moved up a maths class, when I went to ReDY I was at E and now I am at C’ (Janelle, Interview, 2015).

While this was a common story, two students, Jonno and Jane, explained how they felt that they had ‘slipped back’ into poor habits in mainstream school. Both, however, were still confident in their ability, as they had ‘proved it’ to themselves in the ReDY program. They both attributed their slip in grades to poor work ethic, which could be resolved with more effort. Of those students who maintained the effort more successfully, Ewan described what it felt like to complete Year 10: ‘it felt great—it felt like something I’d never be able to do four years ago, I just thought I would be someone who didn’t pass high school’ (Interview, 2015). School reports after returning to mainstream largely commented that the students were succeeding in their classes. This was exemplified by a comment by one of Janelle’s teachers: ‘Janelle is a diligent and positive student who is achieving sound results that are consistent with her ability. All assessment tasks have been completed to a good standard and classroom engagement has been high’ (School Report, 2014).

Missed work. The second theme emerging from within the indicator of cognitive engagement, perceptions of competency, was that students felt they were too far behind

in their schoolwork to catch up. In addition to lacking the ability and confidence to do the required work, students perceived that they did not have the competence to complete enough work to meet their teachers' expectations. Mark felt that he did not have the capacity to catch up as 'the academic side was a massive issue, I was really behind in primary school and part of high school ... I was so far behind compared to everyone ... my English was appalling, and my maths was shocking' (Interview, 2015). Being behind was also an issue for Ned, who saw missed work as a compounding issue, explaining that after his first year of high school 'then came Grade 8 and I failed everything because I didn't know how to do it as you're expected to know it from Grade 7' (Interview, 2015). Similarly, after extended absences from school, Charlene felt that there was little recognition of the reason for her gaps in knowledge:

When I did attend school, the teachers used to just hand me work and not explain what I had to do even though I had not been there for weeks at a time. They were rude and thought I was just a trouble maker when really I hadn't been there to understand what they were doing. (Self-reflection, 2012)

Eventually, Charlene put little effort into her learning: 'I wasn't really paying much attention in Grade 9. I guess because I had missed so much of school I didn't really want to be at school' (Interview, 2015). Janelle explained the link between missed work and her perception of competency: 'well, you'd miss stuff—like you know how in TV shows if you miss one episode you get to the next episode and you've missed so much? It's kinda like that at school' (Interview, 2015).

Program teacher Emily explained that within the ReDY program a range of standardised tests were used to identify areas of competence and highlight potential missed work and gaps in knowledge. Emily explained how the students' individual education plans 'started where the kids are at ... not at their grade level'. The smaller

class sizes and intensive learning in the ReDY program were described as instrumental in filling the gaps in knowledge and skills, and students' academic competence was judged relative to the point at which they entered:

You're measuring them against what they were before they came into the program. Not necessarily against the top student in the school. Some of them might come out as really high achieving, high flying students. Quite a few of our students [have] really low academic levels, quite often very low IQ. They are performing much better than they were before, and that's a success for us. (Emily, Staff Interview, 2015)

Claire, the principal, shared this view. Discussing Charlene's academic competence, it was evident that she saw it as relative to what it had been:

The team [did] amazing things for Charlene in the twelve months that she was with us ... she still had gaps in learning ... but she had been brought to a stage where she was functioning really well and she had an amazing attendance. (Interview, 2015)

Similarly, the principal had the opinion that Jacqui had been at considerable risk of leaving school early:

She was on the edge, about to go, and she went into the program. The team discovered all sorts of things about her intellectual capacity at the time, her issues, and really worked very hard with her; and Jacqui worked hard, her family worked hard. She transitioned back into the mainstream. I'm now teaching Jacqui in Year 10 and she is doing well. ReDY gave her a whole lot of things that she didn't have previously. (Interview, 2015)

Poor relationships between the school and the students appeared to produce a situation where missed work led to poor perceptions of student competency. Missing

work resulted in inevitable gaps in information, which made it hard for students with irregular attendance to remain cognitively engaged. When entering the ReDY program, curriculum and delivery were designed so that students were able to improve their perceptions of competency.

Students who were interviewed for this project either transitioned from the ReDY program to the host school, or to a different school to complete Years 11 and 12. Furthering education itself was seen as a sign of academic competence for Mike and Sharon: ‘I wouldn’t have been able to go to college if I didn’t go to ReDY. Because I’d missed so much I just would have been lost if I hadn’t done that’ (Mike, Interview, 2015); and ‘I wouldn’t have finished Year 10 if I didn’t go there. I’m pretty proud of myself’ (Sharon, Interview, 2015).

Summary: perceptions of competency. Qualitative data gathered under the code of perceptions of competency revealed important themes regarding change in cognitive engagement over the time before, during and after students were enrolled in the ReDY program. Before ReDY students had low confidence in their abilities, or considered that they had missed so much work that they were unable to catch up. However, teachers reported that their lack of achievement was the result of lack of effort, not ability or having missed work. This was even the case when students did in fact have low cognitive abilities. In the ReDY program, students’ curriculums were tailored to build from their current knowledge rather than their year level, and each student was given the specific support necessary to succeed academically. When students saw that they could achieve, their confidence was boosted and their feelings of competence increased.

Willingness to engage in classroom tasks. The second indicator of cognitive engagement involves the amount of effort students are willing to put into their learning and classes (Hancock & Zubrick, 2015). There are fine distinctions between willingness

to engage, interest, and participation. Interest in a subject matter is considered affective engagement, while participation is behavioural (Archambault et al., 2009). In the cognitive dimension, it is the willingness to invest effort and energy into learning (Li & Lerner, 2013), rather than spending time (which could be done without much cognitive investment) or finding the subject matter interesting (which can be done without being thoughtful about the work) that acts as an indicator of cognitive engagement.

Three themes emerged in the understanding of this indicator of cognitive engagement: students' perseverance in learning, perceived barriers to engaging, and their motivation in learning. To examine these themes, comments about the students' time before, during and after the ReDY program were examined to identify changes in engagement in each area.

Perseverance in learning. The first theme in this indicator of cognitive engagement centred on students' willingness to stick at a task, especially when their perception of competency was low. It became apparent that students' willingness to engage in learning often occurred as a result of the previous indicator, perceptions of competency. That is, students demonstrated less willingness to put effort into their work if they saw themselves as incapable of successfully completing it. A common theme that arose when students reflected upon their time in mainstream classes was that they gave up when they felt academically incompetent or had missed too much work to catch up, and eventually reached a stage where they saw no point in continuing to put effort into their classes. As Jane explained, 'I just stopped trying. I stopped listening ... I wouldn't ask for help if I got stuck, and I guessed around 98% of the questions on tests. I just didn't try' (Self-reflection, 2014). Jonno said that he eventually gave up because he felt that he didn't get the assistance he needed from his teachers: 'If you put your hand up you would have to wait ages to get help [so eventually] if I couldn't do

something I just wouldn't bother to do it' (Interview, 2015). Maisy echoed these sentiments: 'I felt like I got so far behind there was no point listening anymore because I didn't feel the need to learn and be engaged with the class ... I didn't have any will to learn' (Self-reflection, 2012). Sharon described a feeling of helplessness: 'I felt like I got nowhere at it ... I just wasn't succeeding, wasn't learning' (Interview, 2015).

Such recollections of 'not bothering' and 'giving up' were also found in the school reports written by teachers, which frequently mentioned the need to increase concentration, focus and effort. Often these comments were contrasted with the teacher's perceived competency of the students: that they were performing below their ability and their grades did not accurately reflect their potential. Sharee's teacher, for example, wrote, 'I am confident that, with greater effort, she can achieve very good results in this subject' (School Report, 2009), and Jimmy's teacher said, 'he wastes a lot of class time preferring to sit and chat. Therefore his work is incomplete. Jimmy can easily achieve higher marks with more effort and motivation' (School Report, 2009).

For some students the process of disengaging in this area occurred over a long period. For Mike it took years of being 'told' he did not concentrate before he started not bothering: 'every single year on every single report I got "is smart but doesn't really focus"' (Interview, 2015). In the school reports, teachers often mentioned that students needed to demonstrate extra effort to 'make up' for absences from school, or as one of Charlene's teachers explained, 'She needs to put in the extra yards if she wants to catch up on lost work due to her extended absence. She has the ability, she needs to generate the desire' (School Report, 2011).

Choice was an important aspect of reengagement according to ReDY staff. Program teacher Emily described the importance the program put on individual willingness—rather than compulsion—to engage:

It's really evident in the program, students who are there, and really working hard and understand exactly what it is that they need to do. Not exactly how, because we teach them how but, the fact that they need to change for themselves. (Staff Interview, 2015)

The 'how', as Emily put it, was embedded in the individualised assistance that was offered to the students: 'I always got the help I needed down there' (Sharon, Interview, 2015).

Many students discussed persevering with their work in the ReDY program, compared with their time before. 'Since I have been down here at the program, I've done more work in this short amount of time then I have in two years [in the host school]' (Norm, Self-reflection, 2010). Ned said, 'by not avoiding homework like I did in high school ... doing as much work there that I can do. Coming to school early to finish work that I haven't completed ... I just have to keep trying and trying' (Self-reflection, 2010). Sean saw that a change of effort was going to help him in the long run: 'I think putting effort in to all my work has improved by lots and this will help me in the future by getting a job' (Self-reflection, 2010). The increase in willingness to put energy into their learning demonstrated a strengthening in these students' cognitive engagement, represented by a determination to continue to put in the effort even when the work was difficult.

Students persevering with tasks, willing to have a go when they were finding the work difficult, or in a subject that they had not liked in the past, was a common theme mentioned by some students. Many reflected that this was in stark contrast to their time before the program: 'Even if I don't like the subject I still have a go. That shows me that I have changed' (Sharee, Self-reflection, 2011); and from Ewan: 'I am trying my hardest to get my marks up, I am listening in school, I'm doing my homework, and I

have actually got work in all my subject books not just the ones I like' (Self-reflection, 2011).

On the students' return to the mainstream, some teachers reported that this commitment to engage persisted even when students found the work difficult, suggesting an intrinsic change in students' willingness to engage. For example, Cody's teacher commented, 'His willingness to persevere is commendable. He has maintained a positive attitude towards this subject' (School Report, 2012). Janelle's teachers were equally impressed: 'Whilst she finds some topics quite challenging, she remains fully focused and never stops trying' (2012). Paddy's teacher was 'pleased with his perseverance and genuine attempts to address assessment tasks' (2013). Perhaps the best example of this perseverance as a willingness to engage was illustrated by Jacqui, who was assessed in the ReDY program as having a very low cognitive ability. Jacqui's host school reports before the program consistently urged her to put in more effort. Afterwards, she was described as coping well with the challenge that comes with the advancement to the next level of thinking and working mathematically:

As long as she is willing to remain persistent with her effort, I am confident she will continue to make progress ... whilst she finds some topics quite challenging, she remains fully focused and never stops trying. Jacqui works quite well independently in class. (School report, 2014)

Sharon's teacher reported a similar sentiment, stating that she displayed 'a positive approach to the difficulties and confusion which arise as new information is introduced. Her willingness to persevere and apply logical thinking to problems has been beneficial to her progress' (School Report, 2013). Perseverance despite challenging academic situations was a clear indicator of students' willingness to engage

in learning. It was found, however that during the ReDY program it was easier to persevere because many of the barriers to education were removed.

Barriers to engaging in learning.

The second theme that emerged in relation to students' willingness to engage in classroom tasks was perceived barriers to learning. Reading the school reports with the benefit of hindsight revealed that teachers held seemingly unreasonable expectations of students. For example, Jacqui, whose IQ test in the program indicated that she should receive disability funding, was frequently told in her reports that she just needed to 'put in the effort studying for tests and ensure that all work is handed in' and 'work a little quicker on her tasks and make sure she completes activities and hands them up for assessment' (School Report, 2012). Her most accurate, although still not compassionate, report indicated that 'Jacqui is an enthusiastic student if the task set is easy' (School Report, 2012). It seems that Jacqui's teachers' non-recognition of her lower ability provided a barrier to her engagement.

Mia reported that she was not able to put effort into learning because of her social anxiety: 'I struggled to feel happy at school as the anxiety had taken over and made me struggle with a lot of things. I wasn't happy staying home as I was sad to effect my attendance and grades' (Self-reflection, 2014). Interestingly, Mia's school reports paint her as a model student, consistently 'polite and well behaved'. While Mia felt that her anxiety was a major barrier to learning, her teachers registered her withdrawn behaviour not as a barrier but as politeness. Janelle, who was a victim of family violence, felt that she could not engage at all: 'I was a mess in Grade 7. I didn't do work and I got kicked out of classes and I didn't really have very many friends' (Interview, 2015). In one of Janelle's school reports, a teacher reported that 'her ability to maintain concentration to

ensure a truly thorough investigation is suspect as she is easily attracted to off task group behaviours' (School Report, 2012).

While Sharon did attend, she also felt that she wasn't able to put the effort in to her learning because of the social pressure she felt: 'I think a lot of the time it was 'cos I didn't do the work and things and everyone was judging me and stuff and then I'd get angry and not like anyone' (Interview, 2015). Being influenced by the social aspects of the classroom was a common comment in school reports: for example; 'Socialisation with his group of friends is highly activated and if the same energy was given to work then there would be no issues' (School Report of Mike, 2011). This is a particularly interesting comment given that Mike had been a constant victim of bullying which led to clinical depression and school refusal by the age of fourteen. While the internal and external influences that affected Mike's mental health are not the focus of this study, the way his depression acted as a barrier to engaging in his schooling is. Mike's negative social experiences at school, being reported by his teacher as 'having fun', would possibly have exacerbated his depression rather than removing the barrier. Within the ReDY program there was a significantly different approach to recognising and removing barriers to engagement.

Martin, a social educator with the ReDY program for three years, defined the program by its intention to increase cognitive engagement: 'It's to reengage the students in learning. Most of the students have, for one reason or another, disengaged from learning up in the mainstream for many different reasons and every individual is a totally different situation' (Staff Interview, 2015). In order to overcome the barriers to engaging with learning, the ReDY program staff identified any issues with cognitive engagement and designed a program to ameliorate them. Emily, a program teacher, explained:

We would have to break down their knowledge of the subject area, and then their behaviour around that subject. Being organised getting homework done, understanding the content and being able to manage and prioritise their work life and their life, really. (Staff Interview, 2015)

This approach to identifying and addressing barriers to engagement appeared to be a remarkably effective strategy for some students. James, the other program teacher, described the contrast in Mia's engagement between entry to the ReDY program and exit, as extraordinary:

[Mia's] work output went up significantly. Got her Grade 10 maths. Got her Grade 10 English. Finished off her Grade 10 art electives, her sociology and psychology electives ... and is now doing college at Senior High. So a girl who went from not attending school at all to a girl who is succeeding in school and overcoming a lot of things. (Staff Interview, 2015)

The barriers which had prevented Sharon from engaging in learning certainly appeared to have reduced: 'I learnt more at ReDY than at the whole of high school' (Interview, 2015). Marcia, who shared this feeling, explained that her reasons for learning more during the program than in the mainstream setting were to do with an internal motivation:

I was more focused on my school, my work and everything else making sure I was doing everything, whereas in Grade 7 and 8 I couldn't be bothered. Being down in ReDY I actually realised I've gotta do my work, and being down there you realise you have that one-on-one time and you can focus on your work and I got so used to focusing on my work, when I'm at school that's all I do—focus on my work. From there I did focus on my work, finished Grade 10. (Interview, 2015)

Once barriers to engaging were broken down or weakened, students appeared to be able to focus on the goals that they had set for themselves upon entry, and showed a new enthusiasm for learning than before entry.

Motivation in learning. Motivation was the third and final theme that emerged within this indicator of cognitive engagement, and it presented as the choice, or willingness, to engage. In mainstream school before the ReDY program, Ewan explained that he was largely bored in class: ‘I sort of paid attention’ (Interview, 2015). Similarly, Sharon revealed that she did not like science so would ‘never do the writing. Just sit there and draw’ (Interview, 2015). Some teachers reflected on the ‘selective’ effort of some students. For example, ‘He can be very capable, even to the extent of being pedantic, when he sets his mind to the task at hand. On other occasions he can also quite luxuriously waste class time’ (School Report of Mark, 2009). Another example of this perception by teachers: ‘On some occasions, John’s work is of a very high quality, yet on others it lacks detail and shows little effort’ (School Report, 2009). A common word describing students’ motivation to learn on the host school’s reports prior to entry to the ReDY program was ‘inconsistent’.

The staff saw that motivation in learning was a key aspect to the success of the ReDY program. Martin, the social educator, explained that they needed ‘to accept why they are in the program and have a desire to improve on their performances’ (Interview, 2015). Teacher Emily went further:

We would turn away [from enrolment to the program] a student who isn’t able to identify anything about themselves they *want to change*. They want to change everything else around them. They want to change their teachers, their school, the rules. It’s not them; it’s everyone else who is the problem. They don’t have any sort of understanding of the fact that they need to change. (Staff Interview, 2015)

Wanting to change in the cognitive dimension refers to the willingness to engage with and apply effort to the academic aspects of the program. Sharee noted that the shift in motivation was not instant:

When I first came in to the program I was not working at all and not having a go. [In the program] I am trying really hard to get all my work done on time and done really well. I am now trying to do extra work to catch up with the things I have missed. (Self-reflection, 2011)

Jimmy also described how he was now engaging in ‘effortful learning’: ‘I even do more than I’m expected ... I don’t mind doing my work now’ (Self-reflection, 2010).

James, a program teacher, recalls that this change in effort is noticeable: ‘[The students] just start handing in their assignments and asking for help and are willing to actually stay after school to finish things up’ (Staff Interview, 2015). Taking the responsibility for their learning was a sign of students’ active engagement: ‘I now know that it’s my fault if I don’t pay attention in class and my fault for getting myself into trouble. I have really made change for myself’ (Josie, Self-reflection, 2010).

A mechanism that seemed to be at work for students in the ReDY program was the realisation that the program only offered help to students who were willing to engage. If a student did not engage, James explained, he or she was asked to go home to determine how motivated they were in engaging with the program:

I think they come to the realisation that it’s make or break. Like, if I don’t change now, it’s done. I think that’s the power of the send-home, because they realise ‘I’ve just been sent home from school because I haven’t done my homework’. It starts to really sink in that it’s an actual problem. (Staff Interview, 2015)

This choice to engage with the content and the learning was obviously constrained. If the student chose not to engage they forfeited their place in the program,

making the choice more like a condition for some students. The ReDY staff were very clear about this: ‘It is a program of choice, but you can’t choose to do nothing’ (Emily, Staff Interview, 2015). The principal, Claire, put this element of choice at the centre of the ReDY program’s success: ‘I think having the program as a choice is absolutely crucial ... if you’re wanting deep and lasting change’ (Staff Interview, 2015).

School reports indicated a diversity of themes relating to the effort and willingness teachers saw students putting into their learning after returning to the mainstream from the ReDY program. The majority of comments relating to this indicator of cognitive engagement reflected a very positive assessment. These comments noted high levels of commitment and motivation. One of Jacqui’s teachers described her as ‘committed and highly involved in the work, Jacqui can really challenge herself. Jacqui has matured as a responsible and diligent learner’ (School Report, 2014). Janelle’s Mathematics teacher was very impressed:

Her results in the end of term test on indices and measurement were great, reinforcing the effort she has been putting in. Janelle also achieved a good result in her finance assignment, demonstrating diligence and effort. She will continue these impressive results, if she can maintain her current effort and focus in class and improve her preparation leading in to assessments. (School report, 2014)

The durability of students’ willingness to engage in learning was described either as a change in attitude or a change in habit or skill. Ewan, who was very keen to discuss the new programming software he was teaching himself, exclaimed:

I’ve gone from hating learning to loving learning ... I guess more than anything ReDY taught me determination and encouraged me to keep going and stuff, there’s not really much point in giving up on something you want to do. (Interview, 2015)

Other comments from students reflecting their motivation to continue learning post-secondary education:

I got my Cert 3 in disability services, I want to do my Cert 4 (Josie, Interview, 2015).

I run the after school care program ... Hopefully after my cert I will do my Bachelor of Education so I can teach the younger ones (Charlene, Interview, 2015).

I started full time college and did Cert 2 and 3 in business as well as the academic side of things, I got a pass in accounting and business, from there I went on to Tas TAFE just last year (Ewan, Interview, 2015).

Finished Year 12, did computer graphics in Year 11 and computer science in Year 12 and then I've just started TAFE for IT—information, digital media and technology (Mike, Interview, 2015).

These examples demonstrate how students continued their cognitive engagement in learning—and their willingness to put effort into formal education years after leaving the program.

Sharon talked about tailoring her future learning to her strengths:

I want to do a traineeship and stuff 'cos I'm still going to get my certificates and the colleges have got the courses what I'm going to do but I'd prefer to do a traineeship because I hate sitting in classrooms, I prefer to do it hands-on and learn from it. (Interview, 2015)

Mark, who was working seven days a week in two jobs at the time of his interview, talked about how he wanted to complete further study but didn't have space for it in his life at the moment. That didn't stop him from engaging in learning in his job as an information guide:

At the gallery, I walk around when it is quiet and look at the art work—I read about it, I look up the most interesting stuff at night, I google it at home. When people come through and ask, I can actually answer it. (Interview, 2015)

Students' reports presented evidence of a changing level of motivation in learning. For some, like Sharon, the change appeared to be positive: 'Sharon has lacked the necessary engagement and focus to produce work of a satisfactory standard but, of late, she has shown a pleasing commitment and engagement in her work' (School Report, 2014). For other students it appeared that they returned to the mainstream with higher engagement, then declined: 'Earlier in the year, Blane was more focused, however, recently his efforts in class are minimal' (School Report, 2014). Mohammed also failed to impress his mainstream teachers, with very few of his results indicating that he had been willing to engage at all. One teacher felt that 'his minimal work ethic has severely inhibited progress. Mohammed is capable of attaining a pass award ... However, he needs to "want" to achieve it without having to be constantly harassed' (School Report, 2013).

Summary of willingness to engage in learning. Three main themes emerged when examining the willingness to engage in learning as an indicator of cognitive engagement. The first, perseverance, was highlighted by narratives of students 'giving up' on learning, often because they felt that they did not have the ability and that the teachers had given up on them. During and after the program, there were strong narratives of students persevering with academic tasks. The lack of perseverance in the mainstream could be understood as an outcome of the second theme, the perceived ability to engage. Some students felt that they could not engage in learning in their mainstream environment for a variety of reasons. It was found that the ReDY program specifically identified and attempted to remove barriers to engagement. The third theme

was the internal motivation to engage, which is obviously linked to the last two. It was illustrated by the selective nature by which students chose to engage with some subjects and not others in the mainstream, and again as the willingness to engage in all tasks despite not liking them during and after the program.

Establishing task-oriented and learning goals.

The third and final indicator of cognitive engagement explored how students set goals for accomplishing tasks and developing learning skills, and highlighted the deliberate approach the program took in developing its structures around the indicators of engagement. Archambault et al. (2009) identified two types of goals students establish that inform cognitive engagement. The first, task-oriented goals, refers to the mastery or achievement of a specific task. The second, learning tools, describes the processes that enable better learning, such as memorisation and self-motivation.

While there appeared to be an absence of task-oriented goals in the comments by teachers on the school reports prior to the ReDY program, many teachers did report on areas where students were deficient in their learning tools. In contrast, in the ReDY program through a discursive process with the staff, students developed three to six goals to work on in the program. The successful establishment and pursuit of goals seemed to be a key initial indicator of a desire to cognitively reengage. Once students had established their goals and been provided an educational space where they could achieve them, they appeared more willing to engage in learning which led to the development of a higher self-perception of competency.

Task-oriented goals. The first theme in this indicator of cognitive engagement is the goals that students set to achieve specific tasks, such as to increase grades, to improve spelling, or to learn times tables. Evidence in the school reports of mainstream teachers helping students to develop task-oriented goals was surprisingly rare. Teachers

reported on what students had achieved in the past term in their classes, but rarely mentioned specific content that students should be mastering. This was in contrast to what happened in the ReDY program, largely because of the goal-setting focus that was part of its structure.

Some students reflected on very specific goals. For example, Zane wrote:

I have really improved on maths and I'm proud of it since I have been doing maths online it's been a lot better and easier to learn more and I'm doing lots of work on it and improving each time. (Self-reflection, 2011)

Ewan noted:

Until this year I struggled with basic maths but now I have a good understanding of things like algebra which this time last year was like a completely different language to me but now it makes sense. Same as fractions it doesn't bother me doing them anymore but before I wouldn't have done them. (Self-reflection, 2011)

In other cases, the establishment of task-oriented goals was less specific; for example, Janelle wrote, 'when I go up [to the host school] I want to do my work and understand it' (Self-reflection, 2012), and Jayden wanted to understand enough to be able to participate: 'I want to be at the point where I can be able to put my hand up and answer the question' (Self-reflection, 2012).

These self-reflections reveal that the achievement of task-specific goals might be attributed externally or internally. External attribution was largely to the program itself, of the extra help that it provided: as Josie explained, 'Last year I was barely getting anywhere with my work but thanks to everyone helping me I am back on top of everything' (Self-reflection, 2010). Others described the attainment of task-specific goals as a result of hard work or practice: 'I've been practicing my tables so I know

them off by heart so in the future I know how to add up and I can get a good job' (Paddy, Self-reflection, 2011).

The desire and skills to set and meet goals existed after the students exited the program. Ewan saw it as a change in dedication to study: 'It is all because of ReDY. I gave up a lot before and now I've got the dedication to decide I want to do something and I do it' (Interview, 2015). Other students established task-oriented goals by completing Year 10, and attending senior college, TAFE or university.

Learning tools. The second area of establishing goals was those goals that students set to enable them to have better learning skills. In the school reports, the establishment of goals to improve learning tools was almost always related to academic achievement. Some students were told that improving 'concentration' and 'application' would be necessary for better results and grades. Jacqui's teacher, for example, required her to 'greatly improve her self-motivation, focus and application to future assessment tasks' (School Report, 2012). Tessa's teacher suggested that she 'needs to set herself goals to improve her concentration and application for the remainder of the year if she wants to improve her overall results' (School Report, 2009). It is implied in such comments that this goal setting should be undertaken by the student, without any suggestions or guidelines in the reports as to how they were to go about it.

Some examples of learning goals offered by subject teachers were centred around organisation: 'I would like to see John develop a study plan outside the classroom that involves revision of material covered in class on a regular basis'; and on following directions, 'I would like to see John actually listen to the answers and explanations given and then act upon this advice' (School Report, 2009). While these suggestions were aimed at helping develop the cognitive engagement between the school and John,

without guidance on how to develop a study plan, or how to listen attentively, it is unlikely that they would have resulted in John heeding the advice.

A different approach was taken by the ReDY program staff, who had designed a plan for achieving the goals that had been identified by individual students. These personalised learning plans were described as ‘working documents’ which would constantly be revised and updated in regular meetings between staff and students.

In the program staff explained that individual plans were designed around increasing skills: ‘how to do homework, how to solve problems, how to get work done, how to organise themselves’ (Emily, Staff Interview, 2015). For example, Maisy set a goal to be more organised: ‘In the future I want to be an organised person who completes all their class work and homework’ (Self-reflection, 2013). For some students the learning tool became apparent through the positive result of putting the new skill in practice. For Tessa and Sharon the learning tools of listening and asking for explanation were rewarded through achievement and understanding: ‘I have realised that when you listen you learn more [and] your school marks go up’ (Tessa, Self-reflection, 2010), and ‘It’s easier having people explain the task a few times before I understand’ (Sharon, Self-reflection, 2012).

Josie reflected that the learning tools of practice and rehearsal equipped her for participating in a job interview years after she left the program. ‘I think that is what helped me get my job, really, with the interview ... I was thinking about ReDY, practising over and over again—like rehearsing questions and stuff’ (Interview, 2015). This example suggested that for some students the learning tools that they established in the program were transferrable to other contexts. This was a powerful indicator of strong cognitive engagement that persisted after the program.

Summary: establishment of goals. The setting and pursuit of goals emerged as a central part of the approach taken by the program. This appeared to be in contrast to the mainstream school environment, where teachers did not give advice on future, task-oriented goals. Suggestions to develop learning tools while still in mainstream classes appeared vague and therefore difficult to put into practice and achieve. The most common advice given by mainstream teachers was to improve ‘concentration’ and ‘focus’, for example, with no indication of how this might be done.

Cognitive engagement summary. The three indicators of cognitive engagement discussed here, perceptions of competency, willingness to engage in learning, and establishing goals, offer ways to understand the complexity behind a students’ disengagement and subsequent reengagement.

The first indicator, perceptions of competency, proved to be an integral aspect of disengagement as well as a final result of reengagement. Typically, students did not see themselves as having the capacity to complete work, or to catch up on work that they had missed, while teachers reported this as lack of effort or willingness. The second and third indicators, willingness to put effort into learning and to establish goals, appeared as a result of a lower level of engagement in the first indicator, perceptions of competency. Put another way, students stopped trying when thought they were not good enough.

During the ReDY program, all three indicators were reflected upon more positively than they had been in the mainstream situation. Interestingly, rather than being the first to change, higher perceptions of competency appeared to result from the reengagement of the other two indicators: students first established goals and were willing to pursue them with the support of the ReDY program staff, and it was only in doing so that they saw that they were competent.

The strength of the relationship with school in the cognitive dimension is exemplified by the extent to which students are invested in their learning. This is indicated by how competent the students perceived themselves to be in completing the tasks expected of them, their willingness to engage with those tasks, and whether or not there was the opportunity to establish and pursue goals for future learning. Seeing how these indications of cognitive engagement change over time has demonstrated the changing nature of the relationship between the students and their school.

Affective Engagement

Affective engagement is the second of the three dimensions of engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004). The quantitative evidence gathered indicates levels of affective engagement and how these changed over time. This was seen through positive and negative teacher comments relating to affective engagement, survey items relating to students' enjoyment of school, and student ratings of how prominent anxiety and anger were for them before and after the program. In addition, changes in goal ratings were analysed where students had identified areas that they wanted to improve upon in terms of school enjoyment. In this next section, the teacher report comments, student reflections and interview transcript data are organised into the identified indicators of affective engagement: enjoyment of school, sense of belonging, attitude towards school, interest in school, and value of education (Archambault et al., 2009). Within each of these I have identified themes which illustrate the various ways in which change in engagement can be explored.

Enjoyment of school. This indicator of affective engagement produced four major themes: how students' school enjoyment was affected by the school environment, their relationships with teachers, themselves, and peer interaction. It became apparent that enjoyment of school was diverse and individual, but a common change in

engagement was evident. Typical of all students who entered the ReDY program was their lack of enjoyment in the mainstream school, an increase during the program, and a decrease afterwards—but not to the same depth as before. Enjoyment of school was a foundational element of engagement in this dimension. It became apparent that when students stopped enjoying school, they disengaged in other affective elements of engagement.

Feelings about school. The first theme that emerged in the qualitative data about students' enjoyment of school was very general. Several students described very strong negative emotions about school before they entered the program. While there are complex and deep reasons behind these intense emotions, the language used to describe their schooling experience is powerful.

For Sharon the memory of schooling generally before the program was vitriolic. 'I hated [school], I honestly hated it...' (Interview, 2015). Others shared the same sentiment, but were more specific and detailed about what they 'hated'. Mike's negative experience with education started early in primary school. 'I didn't like it. I didn't like any school until ReDY helped out a bit ... a lot ... I can never remember liking it' (Interview, 2015). For Josie, the dislike came when she transitioned from a small primary school to secondary. She described her new environment as 'scary, yeah there were just people everywhere ... yeah it was horrible ...' (Interview, 2015). Brigid reported, 'I would just stay at home doing nothing. Honestly nothing. Because I'd rather do nothing than go' (Interview, 2015). Jonno recalled his experience before coming to the host school: 'I went to a school with all boys ... and I simply hated it. I don't know, I just decided to leave there' (Interview, 2015). Jane remembered 'there was just prolonged sadness and bullying and people picking on me all the time' (Interview, 2015). Ewan recalled his feelings for one particular subject: 'I really hated [history] and

I wasn't very nice to [the teacher] for no reason' (Interview, 2015). Janelle made the link clear between affective engagement in this element, and behavioural engagement:

I came to school and I hated it, and I went home and I hated that, and then I would wake up in the morning and would have to do it all over again ... and because of that I just mucked up, played up. (Janelle, Interview, 2015)

The different learning environment of the ReDY program appeared to make a significant difference to how students enjoyed school. Jonno explained that it didn't happen immediately:

The first three weeks I absolutely hated it because it was people I've never been at school with before, and new teachers and no uniform, it was just a completely different place ... then on the fourth week, I must have got used to it 'cause I just really enjoyed it ... everything just changed, my English, my maths, just changed ... everything. Loved being at school—loved working down there. (Interview, 2015)

One aspect of this change in engagement was the varied way in which curriculum was delivered: 'it was really fun—it wasn't like the normal mainstream. We done all different kinds of stuff and you spoke more ... them presentations they were awesome ... research information and getting everyone together and getting up and doing it' (Josie, Interview, 2015); and:

'cos it wasn't always sitting down and writing a book, it was like, we used to get up and go out and do stuff and we had our afternoons where we we'd get to go out and build stuff and do art and stuff ... yeah it wasn't always sitting down in a classroom, and that, to learn. (Sharon, Interview, 2015)

As well as creating an interesting curriculum, the staff put a lot of effort into structuring learning to be achievable and enjoyable, as Norm remembered: 'The team

have helped a lot in this area ... they make this more easier to understand and try to make school more fun for us and to make us want to come every day' (Self-reflection, 2010). This apparent liking for school was maintained after returning to the mainstream campus, at least for some students. Cody explained,

I have realised that school can be very enjoyable if you do the right things; these right things can be transferred to a mainstream class setting, which is the key to ReDY as you must not just succeed in the program but in a mainstream setting as well. (Self-reflection, 2011)

Jonno's teachers reported that after he returned he was 'a friendly and positive student and has made a very pleasing transition into [the class], a subject that he clearly enjoys' (School Report, 2014). Other students had similar comments on their reports: 'Cody is a keen and enthusiastic student who enjoys learning new skills and techniques' (School Report, 2012); 'Blane is a lively student who seems to enjoy his time in the Mathematics classroom' (School Report, 2014); 'Janelle is an enthusiastic and energetic participant in Drama' (School Report, 2014). Obviously students who did not like school were less represented in these results, as they either did not transition from the program to the host school or did not choose to participate in the study.

Feelings about teachers. The second theme that emerged when students talked about their enjoyment of school was how their relationship with teachers affected their experience. It became evident from the school reports, and from students reflecting on their time in mainstream, that before ReDY there was animosity between some of the students and their teachers. Evidence of these poor relationships was largely discussed in the section on conduct and compliance in behavioural engagement later in this chapter. Teachers referred to some students as 'rude', 'aggressive' and 'uncooperative'; and at times students referred to themselves as 'horrible', 'naughty' and 'trouble'.

Sharon was very direct about her feelings towards teachers: 'I didn't get along with any of them really' (Interview, 2015).

There was a distinct change in attitude towards how students felt about coming to the ReDY program, apparently due to their different relationships with the teachers there. Jonno recounted, 'The first class I had I actually really enjoyed it because I didn't feel like the teachers were my enemy any more' (Interview, 2015). Norm linked the relationship with his teacher to improved learning: 'I get on well with all my teachers and this year I've learned more than I ever have, actually concentrating and learning things, the amount of maths and English I don't think I've ever done that much' (Self-reflection, 2011). Zane found that working closely with the social educator increased his engagement: 'Maths for me has been a lot better with Martin. It's more fun doing it and I really enjoy it' (Self-reflection, 2011). For some students, the more 'adult' approach to learning and behaviour management made the school experience more enjoyable. Mike, for example, stated, 'I also think the casual aspect has helped a lot in this area. Having teachers that seem closer to friends than bosses is a lot more enjoyable' (Self-reflection, 2012). Bob reflected, 'My relationships with my teachers were far from up to scratch. Now I am improving relationships with the staff at ReDY and liking what I get back from that' (Self-reflection, 2014).

Martin, the program's social educator, suggested that working with students intensely increased their enjoyment of school, and was an integral part of helping restore a student's confidence:

In a mainstream class room, they can just sit. When they come into the program, they are more focused on what they've got to do. They are happy to have you do one on one work with them. They are much happier to have that. They need one on one work at times to help them through to be able to give them the confidence

to be able to achieve something academically. That's really what the program was about. It's just building confidence back into these students, so that they can perhaps get back into the mainstream and know how to perform to their standards in the mainstream. (Staff Interview, 2015)

Feelings about self. The third theme which emerged when analysing students' enjoyment of school was the impact of external factors upon affective engagement. For some students with especially low self-esteem, enjoying school was not possible because they were not able to enjoy anything about their lives. For example, Mark explained that he was 'suffering from a little bit of anxiety back then. The first day I just refused to go out to the car at all, didn't go to school for about a week at the start of term' (Interview, 2015). Similarly, Jane's experiences of being around others were negative:

Before ReDY I did not like the way I looked, sounded, who I was. I hated school photos, because I thought my teeth were bad. I thought that after the way I was treated by my 'friends' in the past, I couldn't have any more. I don't have anyone to call a best friend. (Jane, Self-reflection, 2014)

Being around any group of people was untenable for Mia:

It was very hard for me to go to school as I had so many fears that left me feeling scared and depressed. When I did go to school I felt very worried and I often didn't want to go back. I would give up trying to come to school. (Self-reflection, 2014)

These negative experiences were shared by Christie: 'Before ReDY I would cry every day I had to come to school, I didn't like being around people' (Self-reflection, 2013). Mike, who had similar discomfort due to depression, stated, 'I'd know [a bout of depression] was happening in Year 8, Year 9 and even before that but I'd just close up,

stay inside and couldn't do anything, if I didn't want to do it I just didn't do it'

(Interview, 2015).

The majority of students talked about how during the program they were able to change how they saw themselves, or learn to manage their low self-esteem, anxiety or depression. For example, Jayden recounted: 'Before I came to ReDY I hated myself but ReDY has shown me how to appreciate myself. I'm at the level where I can treat myself and care about myself. I'm happy that I feel better about myself' (Self-reflection, 2012).

In the program Mia reported that she had the ability to confront her anxiety: 'I didn't want to face any problems because I didn't know how I could' (Self-reflection, 2014).

Some students, like Brigid, were unable to identify exactly what had changed:

I used to absolutely hate school, but now, it actually scares me to say it, I kind of like school. I don't know if it's because I've tried to become a more positive person or because I came to ReDY, but either way, I'm happy. (Self-reflection, 2012)

After the program, students with significant mental health issues that had been identified previously still lived with them every day. They all, however, reported that they had ways of dealing with them as part of their lives. Brigid, previously crippled with social anxiety, talked about the benefits of having become more resilient: 'I don't think I have any strategies, I just, I just suck it up. That's all it is. I just go, "yeah you're dying, but toughen up"' (Interview, 2015). Mike and Ewan both suffered from depression throughout their schooling, but at the time of the interview were able to continue full-time tertiary study. Mike had continued his strategy of physical exercise: 'I always go for runs every night and I just find myself with a lot more focus now. There's less just sitting there' (Interview, 2015). Ewan, who had attempted suicide before he came into the ReDY program, reflected:

I get upset sometimes but I think everyone does ... I don't really get depressed any more. I get upset but not depressed which I think is a normal human thing (Interview, 2015).

Jonno looked back in disbelief:

When I look back to my old person I can't really believe I was like that. I sort of think of it and think it wasn't really me and then now, like back then I could never see myself like I am now, now when I look back it just feels so good to think of it. (Interview, 2015)

Negative peer experiences. The fourth and final theme which emerged in students' enjoyment of school was the experiences they had with peers. It emerged that some students did not enjoy coming to school because these were negative. The ways in which these relationships were reported varied. Some students had been victims of bullying, others had perpetrated bullying; others described generally poor relationships with peers. Evan recalled that 'because of being bullied all the time at other schools I find it hard to make friends because I don't find it easy to trust people anymore I don't trust the friends I have already got' (Self-reflection, 2011). Characteristic of how some students felt about their peers, Sharon recalled her social isolation: 'I can't even remember half the people I used to hate. I just didn't like people. Didn't get along with anyone really' (Interview, 2015).

Jane recalled a very difficult experience of exclusion in the mainstream. Trying to be included, she deliberately turned up to class early one day:

So I thought, I'm going to sit over there so that they have to sit next to me because I don't want to sit on my own, so I'll sit on these desks and they'll sit around me and I won't be alone. I sat down, there were about 16 desks beside me, and they all came in and sat on the very opposite side of the classroom. (Interview, 2015)

For Jane, the negative experience of going to school was made all too clear. She continued:

When I was walking home with my little sister, [another student] gave me the cold shoulder, and as she was walking up ahead, she turned and said, ‘you have no friends’, and she said to my sister, ‘you should be ashamed to be walking beside her ...’ So that was just a day in the life of going to school. (Jane, Interview, 2015)

Other students reflected on the influence that they had over their peers and consequently over the types of relationships that exemplified their time at school. Paddy recalled that

before I came to ReDY I didn’t really get along with many people because I was mean to them and would fight with them but now I understand not to because it is the wrong thing to do and people wouldn’t like you because they might think that you are a bully. (Self-reflection, 2012)

Christie also had a realisation about how her own behaviour had impacted on her past social experiences:

I never really had many friends and still don’t, people just never wanted to be around me when I was there because I really didn’t want to talk about anything other than me and when I was at school people couldn’t care less about me ... I have learned to better understand some social behaviour I struggled with beforehand and have made some good friends in the program. (Self-reflection, 2013)

Deliberate teaching of ‘pro-social behaviour’ formed much of the focus in the program. Improving interpersonal social skills was seen in the same way as improving academic or behavioural skills. Jayden explained the benefit of the program for him:

Before I came to ReDY I hated people and didn't want to be their friends but ReDY has shown me how to make friends. I'm at the level where I can make new friends and have fun. I want to become everyone's friend and not hate. (Self-reflection, 2012)

In a similar vein Brigid, who in the past would get very anxious over comments made about her by other students, reflected on her time after leaving the ReDY program. 'In the past year I have had little things—like just rumours and stuff—but I just don't care—you see now I just don't care. That's the thing, I just stopped caring about anything like that eventually' (Interview, 2015). Bruce and Sharee had a lot of counselling in the program about how to initiate and maintain positive friendships. Bruce reflected, 'I've become more sociable over the year that I've been here in ReDY and have now gained the ability to create friends' (Self-reflection, 2012), while Sharee stated, 'I am now better at keeping friends and friends I can trust. I have been a lot happier with these friends, there a lot better and they are always there for me' (Self-reflection, 2011). Ewan explained it simply as 'I am a lot happier now I enjoy going to school and I enjoy doing things with my friends' (Self-reflection, 2010).

The ReDY program gave students a social space which was very controlled, predictable and safe. For students who had been bullied in the past, and even those who felt their own behaviour was volatile, it provided a sanctuary: 'I always want to come and learn and also have fun. It's a good place to come and I understand that now so now knowing that I can come to school and feel safe' (Sharee, Self-reflection, 2010).

Sense of belonging. The second indicator of affective engagement is the students' sense of belonging in school. It was difficult to distinguish between a general dislike of school that many students felt, and a lack of a sense of belonging to the school and its community. Perhaps the most powerful indication of this lack in a sense of belonging

was indicated through school attendance (see the next section in this chapter, behavioural engagement: attendance). While low attendance was common among the cohort of students involved in this study, there were clear exceptions. For example, compulsory suspensions aside, Jimmy and Drew both had very high attendance rates at the height of their disengagement.

Three themes emerged through analysis of the comments surrounding this area of affective engagement: whether students saw themselves as an important part of the school, how staff valued students, and, whether or not students were treated as unique individuals by staff.

Students seeing themselves as an important part of the school. The first theme of students' sense of belonging centred on whether or not students felt that they were a desirable part of the school. Jimmy and Drew, like others who exhibited challenging behaviour, were often told in school reports that their presence was detrimental to the class and that they disrupted and interfered with others' learning. This was also the case for Marcia, whose teacher commented, 'Marcia has missed a large portion of this year. When she has attended school she has demonstrated poor study habits and disrespect towards other students and staff' (School Report, 2009).

For some students the move from a small primary school to a large secondary campus was isolating: 'I didn't really talk to any of the teachers in the mainstream, I don't even think they all knew my name to be honest' (Josie, Interview, 2015).

Staff valuing students. The second theme related to the sense of belonging was whether or not the students felt valued by staff. Students talked about the feeling of being important to the ReDY staff: 'Down there [in the ReDY program] you're their main priority all the time and feels like you're the only one in the classroom sort of thing, and you do work you get so much help' (Jonno, Interview, 2015). According to

some students the relationship with the staff was important, as Sharon remembered: ‘I felt like I was respected and stuff there’ (Interview, 2015). Several students talked about how the interactions with the staff resembled more respectful, adult relationships. Ewan recalled that the staff ‘seemed more of a colleague than a boss which definitely in the early days made me not want to hate [the staff] as much at some level ...’ (Interview, 2015). Jonno needed to feel trust towards the staff before he felt he belonged:

When I got there I didn’t know [the ReDY program staff], and I didn’t know whether I could trust ’em at first. And then I thought I gained a good relationship with them and then that changed everything and then I felt that I could trust them. (Interview, 2015)

One of the program teachers, James, explained how he saw it as the staff’s role to increase enjoyment of school: ‘I narrow it down in my own mind to two things. Number one, we teach students how to cope in school, in mainstream, and try to teach students, people how to be happy’ (Staff Interview, 2015).

As well as the interpersonal interactions, the students reflected that the way the ReDY program was run made a major difference to their sense of belonging: ‘it wasn’t just about the school work, it was about everything’ (Josie, Interview, 2015).

Staff approach also made an impact of Ewan’s sense of belonging. He recalled: I remember saying ‘you don’t care, you’re just there for the money’ or something like that, which didn’t turn out to be the case at all ... now I realise you don’t get paid that much compared with the crap you deal with. (Interview, 2015)

After the program, mainstream teachers’ reports rarely specifically reflected an opinion on whether or not a student belonged to and was valued in the class. The exceptions were comments such as ‘Maisy is a valued member of our class’ and ‘I enjoyed teaching Jacqui’, which give an indication of the student being welcomed.

There were not as many negative comments like the ones that persisted before the program, describing students as a distraction to others. Some students found that they had trouble belonging when they returned to mainstream. Mark described it as ‘extremely difficult. It was difficult to settle back in. Difficult to get back into the social side of things, which made learning more difficult. Obviously with school social goes hand in hand with learning. I struggled’ (Interview, 2015).

Individual approach. The final theme in this indicator of affective engagement, sense of belonging, was students’ feelings of individual care and attention. Sharon described the ReDY program as a safe place: ‘I felt like I could sit down and actually do the work and I wouldn’t be harassed or judged and like, yeah’ (Interview, 2015). One aspect of this was the program’s flexible nature, as Brigid recalled:

They, like, mould to fit like anyone, like they can arrange things to suit anyone. I can remember when we were doing the swimming thing how I didn’t want to swim with everyone, so Emily would take me to a whole different pool and we’d swim alone. (Interview, 2015)

Janelle compared the ReDY program with her mainstream environment:

The atmosphere, like down there you’ve got nothing to compete with, but up here [in the host school] like, you don’t want to be something else like you know how down there you can answer a question and it doesn’t matter if you get it wrong ... there are the popular people that laugh when you get it wrong but there wasn’t that down there. (Interview, 2015)

This idea of being comfortable with oneself as an individual seemed to resonate with several students when they left the program. Janelle, who used to feel intimidated on the school bus, described it:

You know how you worry about what other people are thinking about you when you are sitting on the bus? They think that you're not good enough, think you're not worth being there, but it doesn't matter any more. We're just us and if people don't like it, it doesn't matter ... (Interview, 2015)

Similarly, Ned thought that he could 'reinvent' himself:

It was actually really, really good. I felt like a different person, I felt like I was starting life all over again. No one knows who I am, I have no history, no one knows what I've done in the past, I am just a blank piece of paper starting afresh. (Interview, 2015)

Jane described a similar feeling about her move to the host school: 'When I transitioned up here people knew the things that had happened at [my previous school], but after being in ReDY I didn't really care because I'm not that person any more' (Interview, 2015).

Attitude towards school. The third indicator of affective engagement, student attitudes towards school, was explored in the section addressing enjoyment of school. This is largely because it appeared that the enjoyment of school preceded changes in attitude towards school and education, as evidenced by Mike's reflection:

I now enjoy school, and I don't get angry when I have to go. I now don't just go there because I have to; I do because I enjoy it. I believe that I have completely changed my view on school. And school work as well, and I now am much happier because of it. (Self-reflection, 2011)

Two themes emerged reflecting how attitude affected engagement. The first was how teachers viewed students' attitudes, and the second was the correlation that students and teachers made between attitude and achievement.

Teachers' views of attitudes. Descriptions such as disinterested, disruptive and disrespectful were common in school reports prior to participation in the ReDY program. Another attitude teachers often attributed to students was being overly casual. For example, John's teacher felt that 'John's casual approach prevents progress' (School Report, 2009), Similarly Marcia's teacher reported that 'a casual approach towards her studies has ... played a major part in this unsatisfactory award' (School Report, 2009). Drew's attitude towards his schooling may have seemed positive: 'Drew is a likeable young man with a happy-go-lucky attitude'; but rather than being seen as Drew's strength, his teacher observed that 'disappointingly however, this attitude has prevented him from gaining higher results in many subjects this year' (School Report, 2009).

Commonly, teachers discussed 'attitude' as being in need of improvement, although it was unclear from the school reports how students were to achieve this. For example, Tessa needed to 'improve her general attitude if she is to achieve further' (School Report, 2009), and Dave's attitude 'need[s] improvement' (School Report, 2011). Marcia 'demonstrated a poor attitude' (School Report, 2009) and Jimmy required 'a more dedicated attitude' (School Report, 2009). Callum's teacher saw that his attitude was something that had major impact on his peers: 'Callum is a leader in the class, and his behaviour and attitude dramatically affects the class dynamic. If Callum takes responsibility for the position in which he is in, both the class and Callum will develop further' (School Report, 2011).

After the program, teachers also reported on student attitudes—generally in a much more positive way. For example, 'Jacqui generally displays a positive attitude to Mathematics and is willing to accept the challenge of new information and concepts' (School Report, 2014), and 'Cody has really pleased me with his attitude and

application to Science this year since his transition from the ... program'. The teacher elaborated with a description of an improved attitude:

He has demonstrated that he is a mature and capable young man, and has worked consistently to produce practical and theoretical work of a very good standard.

Cody has been attentive, willing to learn, well organised, and consequently displayed a sound understanding of all scientific concepts studied. (School Report, 2012)

This improvement in attitude was reported by other teachers of returned students: 'We wish to congratulate Tessa on her improved approach, and trust she will continue to maintain her level of effort and achievement next year.' (School Report, 2011); and

Drew continues to be a cheerful and co-operative member of our homeroom group, and he should be proud of his achievements. He generally has a positive attitude towards his studies, and should continue to do well next year with the same level of application. (School Report, 2011)

Good attitudes get results. The second theme in how student attitudes towards school impacted affective engagement was how students talked about how their attitude towards school as directly related to their success. For example, before the program, Bob recounted, 'My attitude was something along the lines of "I don't give a fuck" which was exactly the opposite to what it should have been' (Self-reflection, 2014).

Jacqui elaborated:

Before ReDY I had the worst attitude ever and I mean ever! I would back chat to teachers, say rude comments, say mean stuff to students, and just speak mean to people. I just wouldn't care the way I acted. I would find it funny even though it was extremely rude and made others not feel good about themselves. (Self-reflection, 2013)

During the program students reflected on how they perceived their ‘attitude’ was instrumental in achievement of goals. Mary reflected, ‘I think that I am achieving this goal by having a positive attitude about school and not be negative’ (Self-reflection, 2011). Mia saw her achievement of task-oriented goals being assisted: ‘By changing my attitude to maths it improved my work. I have improved on staying in the classroom and am doing this more’ (Self-reflection, 2014). The change of attitude towards school was evident on students’ return to mainstream through their reports, attendance and behaviour. As Ewan explained, ‘when I went back into mainstream everything was pretty good ... I definitely entered a new headspace around school’ (Interview, 2015).

Interest in schoolwork. The third indicator of affective engagement relates to the interest that students showed in their schoolwork. Before the program some teachers reported that their students lacked interest in their subject area. For example, ‘Harry is displaying little interest in this subject and is often distracted by too much conversation’ (School Report, 2010). These comments, however, were relatively rare, which after understanding the extent to which these students were disinterested in their schoolwork was an interesting omission. For example, ‘By year 9 I started to drift off and that again, it was ... more getting bored and uninterested’ (Mike, Interview, 2015). Making learning ‘interesting’ was a concept which appeared to be owned by the teachers and the content, rather than by the students. Claire, the school principal, observed that the students ‘were actually bored in class, as well as all the other issues that they had. So the actual schoolwork did nothing for them. It actually further disengaged them. Why would you come to school and be bored?’ (Interview, 2015). Janelle discussed the difference between sitting in class in mainstream compared with the program:

Like when you were up in mainstream you could sit there and think about everything, about what can you do, or how can I make the time go faster, but at

ReDY the lessons just fly by ... 'Cause I was actually doing the work. (Interview, 2015)

Part of the way that schoolwork became more 'interesting' for the students was in its delivery. The teachers, by necessity, were innovative in their approach as Claire explained: 'The quality top class teaching that is going on in the ... program, I say that is where our best teaching is actually happening' (Interview, 2015). Ben, the ReDY program social educator, took a more pragmatic view:

I think, obviously, we have the advantage of a smaller number of students and more staff to help with individual learning. ... As time goes on if they are engaged and in the program, they tend to use some of the skills that they have succeeded in or that they used to succeed in other areas. (Interview, 2015)

This observation appeared to be consolidated when the students entered the program, illustrated by Jonno: 'now I am in ReDY I find it a lot easier to listen and become interested. And to also concentrate because it's a quiet and calm environment to work in and there is more help than up in mainstream' (Self-reflection, 2013).

Enjoyment of school appeared to be related to success and interest in subject areas, as Charlene explained: 'Now that I have more of an understanding of maths, it makes it fun and makes me feel good about myself' (Self-reflection, 2012). The positive academic success improved Jacqui's sense of achievement: 'In maths I have been scoring 100% and wow, has that made me feel really good about myself' (Self-reflection, 2012). For Jonno, completing work had an impact on how he felt about himself: 'I am feeling quite good about myself now that I am getting things done since I have been in ReDY I have completed all my homework and handed it in on the day it is due' (Self-reflection, 2013). Students' enjoyment of school was affected by their

willingness to engage and their perceptions of competency. Conversely, when school was not enjoyable Evan did not want to ‘bring it home’:

Most of the time I dislike going to school because it is where most of my problems start. I hate doing homework because it is from school and school work should be kept at school they should not [have] invented it (Self-reflection, 2011).

Value of education. The final indicator in the dimension of affective engagement is the value students place upon education. Two themes emerged from the reports, self-reflections and interviews. The first was how education is perceived as consisting of linear steps along a pathway, and how completion of one step is valued because it gives access to the next, eventually leading to a career. The second theme is the perception that completion of education will give better opportunities in life and is thus of great value.

Progressing along the pathway. The first theme, the idea that being successful in school will lead to a fruitful career, was present in many of the self-reflections made during the program. No doubt the connection between school success and career prospects was made clear by some teachers; for example, ‘Charlene is encouraged to remain focused on her studies in order to begin to determine a career pathway that will be life giving for her in future years’ (School Report, 2011). Completing Year 10 was the most obvious educational goal in the pathway, and the ReDY program’s structure and location played an important part in the achievement of this goal according to the principal, Claire:

The other thing that’s quite unique about this program is that it is attached to a school. It’s not an alternative program out there in the community where the kids have already dropped out of school and that’s much harder to reengage them. I think, because they actually are still part of the community and we’ve also given

them a pathway. So, if you were going to an alternative school program that is not connected to the school, then it's a bit fuzzy about where they're going. So, they've got their pathway and that's part of the attractiveness of it is to say we want you back into mainstream. (Interview, 2015)

For many of the students who transitioned back into the mainstream, the direct pathway into and out of the program helped considerably. 'I don't think I'd have got through to grade 10' (Sharon, Interview, 2015).

During the program the value of continuing education was reinforced as a possibility and an aim, as Mike recalled: 'I would have never even considered going to college but now I am going, not only just for further education, but for a clear career pathway' (Self-reflection, 2010). This change in attitude was implicit through the reengagement of students across the many elements, and explicit with staff highlighting strengths and designing work experiences. Norm completed his Certificate Two qualifications in building and construction while in the program: 'I'm not looking at going onto college after year 10 as I would much rather an apprenticeship' (Self-reflection, 2011). For Mary, the work experience encouraged her to re-evaluate her pathway. In her first reflection she stated, 'My career pathway is to be an architect' (2010); then, having spent time at a work placement in an architect firm, 'I decided architecture wasn't for me ... I am interested in interior design' (2011). Brigid plans to do her teaching degree:

I went from having no idea what I was doing, where I was going or what I wanted to do in the future, to knowing what college I want to go to and, that I am going to University and what I am going to study. (Self-reflection, 2012)

For Mike and Charlene, the skills they developed in the ReDY program led directly into their first full-time employment. Mike is now working at a graphic design studio. He recalled:

It worked out good, the way things got structured after I showed [ReDY program staff] that video of design stuff and grew interest in it and I got into design and everything's structured together, like really well. I was learning all that I wanted to learn and I knew if I wanted to do more work than I could. (Interview, 2015)

Charlene completed her certificate three in childcare, and did her work experience placement at what would become her place of employment: 'I achieved my job. [The ReDY program staff] helped me get in to the path that I wanted to do with my life, and I've been there three years now' (Interview, 2015).

Some students saw the skills they learnt in education as beneficial for future employment. Early in the program Marcia realised that 'most of the time I just can't be bothered getting up, its stuffing up my education that I need or I won't be able to get that job I want in the future' (Self-reflection, 2010). At the time of the interview Marcia was preparing to leave for the army. Christie also saw the skills necessary for enhancing her job opportunities: 'I want to improve my school work so I am not dumb and so I get a good job and not working at KFC all my life' (Self-reflection, 2010).

Education improves life. The other theme in this element of affective engagement was the realisation that education and learning are inherently beneficial. Some teachers, in their reports before the program, attempted to highlight this point: 'Janelle's largest obstacle to success was her unwillingness to follow instructions; I hope that attending ReDY will assist her in understanding the value of her educational opportunities' (School Report, 2012). Before the program, many students did not see the role of education as life improving: 'I never wanted to be at school because I couldn't

be bothered, it wasn't important' (Jonno, Interview, 2015). Brigid reflected on her change in opinion: 'I never used to go to school, I always looked at it as an option, but now I know that I have to go to school to better my chances of going far in life' (Self-reflection, 2012).

During the program there was an emphasis on the importance of learning for the improvement of one's life. Program teacher Emily explained that the aims of the ReDY program were to achieve 'higher educational outcomes, and higher personal satisfaction. It's to help the students achieve their goals' (Staff Interview, 2015). Callum reflected that he felt that because of the program he was 'a stronger learning person than ever, this program makes me realize how learning is so important' (Callum, Self-reflection, 2012).

After the program, students recalled a change in perception of the value of education. Sharon explained it as an awakening:

I wouldn't say I had my head together, but I think I woke up to myself and realised that I can't do what I want to do all the time, like I need to get through high school and that or I won't really have a life in like, ten years' time.

(Interview, 2015)

Marcia was grateful that she now felt that she was heading on the right path: 'I'm just glad I've got to where I am now...I'm on my way. I am just happy now, happy where my life's going' (Marcia, Interview, 2015).

Affective engagement summary. The four indicators of affective engagement offer a way to understand the complexity behind the students' disengagement and subsequent reengagement in this dimension. By investigating the students' reports, self-reflections and interviews with both staff and students, changes in engagement in each of the elements were observed.

It became apparent that for the students' overall engagement in school, the most significant element of affective engagement was the enjoyment of school. There were a myriad of stories of why students disliked school before the ReDY program that can be broken down into three major categories: the effects of peers, mental health issues, and the school itself—including relationships with teachers. A common thread amongst all students at the point of entering the ReDY program was their overwhelming dislike of school. This dislike affected other aspects within this dimension of engagement.

Students did not feel like (or were told) they did not belong. Students did not find classes interesting and eventually could not see any point in coming to school at all.

Not all students instantly enjoyed coming to school when they first enrolled in the program, however, they reported a sense of calm safety in ReDY. They felt that the staff were there for them and that they belonged. The work presented to them was achievable, and tailored to their interests. After a number of weeks, students reflected that they did now enjoy school. They wrote about how the relationships with their teachers and peers had improved, and how their anxiety or depression was more manageable.

Behavioural engagement

Referring to student actions, behavioural engagement is the final dimension of engagement identified by Fredricks et al. (2004). I have gathered evidence that might indicate a student's level of behavioural engagement, including attendance records from before, during and after the program, positive and negative teacher comments relating to conduct and participation, and survey items relating to how well students perceived they got along with their peers, teachers and families before and after the program. In addition, change in goal ratings were analysed where students had identified areas that they wanted to improve upon in terms of conduct, participation and attendance. In this

next section, I have organised the teacher report comments, student reflections, and interview transcript data into the identified indicators of behavioural engagement: conduct, homework completion, participation and attendance (Archambault et al., 2009). Within each of these indicators of engagement, I have identified themes which illustrate the various ways that change in engagement can be explored.

Conduct. Students' poor conduct and non-compliance with rules is often cited as being synonymous with 'disengagement'. The interpretation of engagement used in this study, however, sees behavioural engagement as a result of the interactions between students and schools. Student conduct, in this interpretation, is a strong indication of the strength or weakness of the relationship between the student and the school, rather than something where the 'blame' resides with students.

Predictably, much was written by students and teachers about student conduct. From the comments and transcripts, six themes emerged: the students' self-concept, student relationships with teachers, student relationships with peers, the role of anger in conduct, behaviour 'choices', and, consequences for poor conduct.

Concept of self as a student. The first theme emerged through the observation that, at the time of disengagement in the mainstream school, students often labelled themselves in very negative terms. For example, Ewan saw himself as 'a horrible kid for my teachers ... I was a little shit' (Interview, 2015), while Ned recalled: 'I was always a little terror of a child, always getting myself into trouble' (Interview, 2015). These negative descriptions were always in relation to school and in particular to their conduct in school. Sharon described herself as: 'just feral, just doing everything I wasn't meant to be doing' (Interview, 2015). Interestingly, the students interviewed never referred to their peers in the same way: when asked whether Sharon's peers had influenced her negatively, she replied, 'No—it was just me'. Ewan stated, 'I was

probably by far, the worst. Everyone else seemed to care ... they weren't arseholes to their teachers ... if anything I probably dragged them down'. Mark had the same response: 'No. Definitely not. No, everyone else was well behaved and definitely in front, even most of my friends were well behaved. Nah it was just me' (Interview, 2015).

In the school reports, some teachers' comments implied labels which appeared to reinforce the students' poor self-concept. John's teacher reported that his 'main area of concern is his talkative nature in academic classes and his argumentative response to correction. John is so conscious of the 'smart' response and classroom 'acting' that his own progress is compromised' (School Report, 2009). This description indicates the teacher's negative impression of John, implying that he is immature; Jonno's pastoral teacher wrote, 'Jonno's diary marks for behaviour have continued to be inconsistent, indicative of a need for him to respond more maturely when issues arise' (School Report, 2012). A variation on this theme was illustrated by Mark's teacher who made it clear that Mark was not living up to his 'potential':

Mark could be a leader in the home class. He has high aspirations for a good career and the academic ability to achieve them. Unfortunately, he too often chooses to misbehave in classes. When he fails to follow a teacher's directions and is corrected, he almost invariably responds rudely, escalates a conflict and is sent out of class or walks out. (School Report, 2009)

Ned explained that once a label existed, it was difficult to shake: 'I think once you get that name in concrete as a bit of a trouble person ... like, as soon as it happens they pull you up straight away. That's what I felt' (Interview, 2015). Other students commented on the way that they 'lived up' to their labels. Mark found himself in a cycle of poor behaviour followed by a standard process of punishment: 'School was just

more “well you’ve done this you’re suspended for a week”. Come back and apologise and you can do it all over again, basically’ (Interview, 2015). Janelle also cemented her label as a ‘disruptive student’: ‘I’d just talk, wouldn’t stay in my seat, I’d talk back to the teachers ... I was very loud ... And then I’d just get kicked out and then do it all over again’ (Interview, 2015). For Ned, the label carried over from one year to the next—despite his assertion that he had turned over a new leaf: ‘by the end of grade seven I had a bit of a name for myself, most teachers knew I was a bit of a trouble child so they’d watch out for me in grade 8’ (Interview, 2015).

Several students reflected that they were a ‘different person’ after their time in the ReDY program, suggesting that their self-concept had altered. Students defined this changed self-concept not only through their behaviour, but also through the motivations behind their behaviour. Marcia compared her former self in relation to how outside influences—the school before and the military after—valued her: ‘I [went] from being this person who had after school [detention]s and [lunch time] detentions one after one another and turn around and finish grade ten, and now leaving for the Army’ (Interview, 2015).

Jonno’s story revealed that his perception of himself as a student changed. When asked about his prior disruptive and violent behaviour, he replied, ‘I just don’t need to do that any more. I have become a different person I think ... like put it down to my mind really—what I was thinking, what I used to think compared to the way I do now’ (Interview, 2015). In a similar vein, Janelle saw that her previous behaviour was not desirable for her anymore:

In grade seven, kicked out, didn’t listen, distracted people. In grade eight [after returning to mainstream] I was—not a nobody—I wasn’t centre of attention, like I didn’t want that anymore. And I was happy with having just one or two people

think I was funny instead of the whole class. I didn't want everyone to be staring at me any more. (Interview, 2015)

Relationships with teachers. The second theme in the indicator of behavioural engagement, conduct, was how students commonly reflected on their interactions with teachers whether as personal confrontations or as general opposition. At times teachers discussed how students needed to interact with them in appropriate ways. During the program these narratives shifted. Mark, Ned and Sharon provided clear examples of seeing themselves in personal confrontation with individual teachers. Mark recalled, 'I remember going to throw a table at one teacher because he really got under my skin' (Interview, 2015). Ned described a more targeted relationship where he 'used to cause trouble all the time. Used to pick on the ... teacher' (Interview, 2015). Sharon used her personal confrontation with a teacher as a reason to skip his classes: 'I didn't like him. Everyone thought he was a paedophile and I didn't like him so I never went to class' (Interview, 2015). For Jonno, disagreements with teachers led to violence. After discussing one outburst, he recalled: 'There was another incident with a teacher where she gave me a lunchtime [detention] and I didn't agree with it so I threw scissors across the classroom, and took my anger out on the teacher' (Interview, 2015).

Some teachers suggested that their students did not interact with them appropriately. For example, one teacher reported about Mark, 'His responses to correction have been argumentative and rude [and he exhibits] flagrant disobedience when a teacher asks him to stop a certain behaviour' (School Report, 2009). Similarly, his teacher felt strongly that John's behaviour was 'very disruptive in class and is often argumentative when questioned. He needs to settle more easily into class work, rather than constantly seeking attention from classmates' (School Report, 2009). Cody's teacher found he had a 'confrontational manner' (School Report, 2009).

Students also referred to oppositional behaviour before entering the program in general terms, and based on responses in this study, they generally ‘owned’ the behaviour. Mark recalled that ‘primary school was pretty bad. I was always getting into trouble, getting suspended, getting into a lot of fights with the teachers’ (Interview, 2015). And Sharon: ‘I was a bit off the rails and stuff and I’d push and push and push and I think that’s the reason I didn’t get on with any of the teachers’ (Interview, 2015). An exception to student ownership over their behaviour was exhibited by Evan, who felt that teachers generally were a negative influence:

I think that it is hard to improve my behaviour at school if the teachers are giving you a hard time. All the other teachers at other schools have gave me a hard time because I am the bigger person the other people pick on me. (Self-reflection, 2011)

During the program there appeared to be a significant shift in how the students talked about teachers. Janelle illustrated this change in sentiment: ‘Before I came to ReDY I used to hate every teacher I came across except a few. But now I like all three [program] teachers and I get along with all the students too’ (Self-reflection, 2012). For Sharon, while her relationships changed for two of the three teachers, she recalled that ‘Emily (program teacher) I wasn’t real nice to, but yeah I got along with her ’cos I had to’ (Interview, 2015). This pragmatic shift to ‘having’ to get along with teachers in the ReDY program was possibly because there were fewer students and a much higher teacher–student ratio. As Jane explained, there was ‘a smaller group of people that the teachers can deal with’ (Interview, 2015). James, a teacher in the ReDY program, highlighted this aspect of behaviour management as one aspect of why things worked differently in the program compared with in the host school: ‘It’s just that it’s very difficult to actually get away with it.’ The other, perhaps more important, aspect James

explained as ‘the culture ... kids know the culture in that class is that you don’t misbehave’ (Staff Interview, 2015). He explained further:

We don’t have that much calling out, or a paper ball being thrown is just sort of, it doesn’t happen. Because we won’t take in, say, three or four kids at a time, that culture is just maintained. You take in a student. They come in. They see how things work. (James, Staff Interview, 2015)

Students also talked about the teachers in a much more supportive way. Norm wrote, ‘The feedback that I get from [the ReDY program staff] is constantly positive, this boosts my self-confidence and I think on it and believe in myself’ (Self-reflection, 2010).

After the program the students who completed their time at the host school talked about a different relationship with their teachers. While Sharon acknowledged that perhaps her teachers were putting in an effort, she saw that the change in relationship was down to her approach:

Some of [the teachers] I got on really well with when I come back up, some I just don’t speak to. I think that not only they realised that I’ve sort of woken up to myself but I realised that I’m not going to see them for the rest of my life and not to treat them pretty bad. (Interview, 2015)

Ewan also saw that having poor relationships with his teachers was detrimental to himself: ‘I’ve realised if I be annoying to the teachers it’s my own education I’m destroying’ (Self-reflection, 2010).

Peer influences. The third theme in the indicator of conduct was how students were influenced by their peer group. Before the program, some students saw their conduct choices as a collective endeavour which built camaraderie: ‘We was always just

getting into trouble and things, and we'd pick on people—thought it was fun' (Jonno, Interview, 2015). Marcia had a similar recollection:

We wasn't too bad ... but if one of us said something then we'd be up for it, you know, because we grew up together it was like if I'm gonna get in trouble, you're going get in trouble so we're in it together. (Interview, 2015)

More often, however, students saw their peers either as antagonists or as innocent bystanders. Jane saw her class mates as a threat: 'as soon as people started to find out that I talked a lot of trash about people and I got upset easily ... they would use that against me' (Interview, 2015). For some of the boys, classmates were a source of violence: 'I was fighting with this guy and that ended up in [a] classroom and me throwing him through a bookcase' (Ewan, Interview, 2015). Mark had a similar story: 'Me and a guy got into a fight for some unknown reason and the teacher, strangely enough, told us to take it outside ... so we went out and I put his head through a window' (Interview, 2015).

Before entry to the program some teachers talked about student misbehaviour as doing a disservice to other students by distracting or disrupting them from their work. For example, 'John needs to address his attention seeking behaviour as this is often disruptive for the class. He also frequently interrupts teacher instruction' (School Report, 2009). In her reports Tessa was reminded to 'be respectful of both staff and fellow students' (School Report, 2009). Some teachers' reports placed the responsibility of the rest of the class on the student's influence or behaviour; for example: 'John's disruptive behaviour is having serious consequences for his progress and the class as a whole. He needs to take responsibility for his actions and behave in an appropriate manner' (School Report, 2009), and 'Blane is sometimes polite ... but his behaviour is frequently a distraction to those around him ... It is a concern that sometimes Blane is a

safety risk in the workshop because of his behaviour' (School Report, 2012). On the whole, students agreed with this assessment of being a disruption, for example when Janelle reflected upon her impact on her classmates: 'When I was in classes, when I didn't get kicked out of them, I just distracted everybody else' (Interview, 2015).

The small environment and different 'culture' within the program appeared to make a major difference to how students were influenced by their peers. For some it was as simple as being away from the antagonists they met in the mainstream: 'I find that it's easier to behave at school when you get along with the students and teachers' (Sharee, Self-Reflection, 2011). Sharon identified the small environment as beneficial 'Cos like I'm a more one on one person, 'cos I hate being around too many people and that, 'cos that's when I know I'm not going to do what I'm told to do' (Interview, 2015).

For Janelle, the individual focus was all important:

Its easier to focus down there because you don't have the people who distract the class because everyone's focusing down there, you don't have the kids up the back who are laughing, kids that are pointing out every problem (Interview, 2015)

The individual attention in the ReDY program where students were constantly reminded to 'focus on yourself' rather than on others' behaviour made the biggest impact on Jane:

You don't have a reason to do the wrong thing because there is nobody there to impress. When you do do something to make a fool of yourself, to make yourself 'big'—look at me, look at me—you just end up looking like an idiot anyway. (Interview, 2015)

Interestingly, the individualised approach helped Mike to see his personal journey as a shared one: 'It wasn't just me. It was to see everyone, doing their own thing,

moving on to whatever they were going on to and you felt like you weren't the only one trying to ... move on' (Interview, 2015).

Ben, the social educator in the program, explained how the 'culture' of the program, as well as explicit teaching of appropriate behaviour made a difference:

If we compare students when they enter ReDY and as time goes on, certainly their behaviour improves and I think they just learn also how to respect boundaries and respect others within the classroom, whether it be peers or teachers. (Staff Interview, 2015)

Paddy reflected on becoming aware of appropriate ways to speak to his peers and the impact that that can have: 'I didn't really know when I was being rude and mean but now I know not to do that because that's how you lose friends' (Self-Reflection, 2012).

A mechanism that was used in the program was giving 'strategies' for working on particular student goals. Ned, who had a goal to not fight with his peers, discussed a strategy that was working for him:

I try by accepting what people are saying and by not arguing with what they have said. This one is an important [goal] for the rest of my life so I can get on with people and not get into verbal fights with them. (Self-reflection, 2010)

While the small, tightly controlled, positive environment in the program helped many students shift their conduct, the anticipation of returning to the mainstream environment made some students uncomfortable, as Sharee explained: 'When I am back up at the high school it will be a bit different. I will need to try and get along with the kids' (Self-Reflection, 2011). Mary offered similar sentiments:

My behaviour at ReDY isn't a problem at all I have been putting in 100%, but if I was to go back up to mainstream, I think that I would struggle with my behaviour

as I would be with all my friends again and I wouldn't know what I'm doing in classes so I would just misbehave to try out get out of it. (Self-reflection, 2010)

As they predicted, some students did struggle when they were returned to their peers in the mainstream environment. Jane reflected, 'I have fallen back to some of my old habits and that hasn't gone very well this year. Talking behind people's back. Jumping to the wrong conclusion. Seeking attention in the wrong way' (Interview, 2015). This observation, echoed by Jonno, Sharon and Janelle, demonstrated that students returning to the mainstream were able to analyse their behaviours. Jane and the others highlighted exactly the types of triggers, choices and strategies they could use to improve their conduct. After 'slipping' initially after returning to mainstream, Jonno enacted the strategies that he had independently identified to improve his conduct:

I realised that I was having bad relationships with teachers again and at home I was hanging around with the wrong people as well ... so I sort of just started being a bit of an idiot really ... I had an attitude, didn't do homework, didn't really do much work in class at all, just didn't listen, and then I realised that that was happening I needed to fix it, and I fixed it so much quicker because I went through ReDY. If I didn't go through ReDY it wouldn't have fixed it. It pretty much just stopped instantly, as soon as I wanted to fix it. (Interview, 2015)

Reflecting this, Jonno's school report later that year described his change in conduct: 'I appreciate the cooperative and reliable manner he brings to each class. Jonno is an excellent role model in regards to his uniform and adherence to the College Code of Conduct' (School Report, 2014).

Although Jonno was able to interact with his peers in a positive way, not all students demonstrated such a dramatic turnaround. Mohammed's teachers, for example, did not report a significant difference in his conduct:

Mohammed's behaviour has been less than satisfactory ... He has failed to apply himself in a consistent manner to set tasks. Mohammed has demonstrated a lack of responsibility for his own learning and is a source of distraction for others.

(School Report, 2013)

Anger. While anger can be viewed as an aspect of affective engagement, anger control emerged as the fourth theme in the discussion of conduct. Before the program Sharon's anger was all-encompassing: 'I used to be angry with everybody. Somebody would say something I didn't like and I'd just go off' (Interview, 2015). Commenting on his primary school experiences, Mark reflected, 'a lot of it was to do with violence and anger control' (Interview, 2015). Mike and Jane discussed how the source of their anger transferred from one location to another. Mike was bullied outside of school which 'usually ended up me getting really mad and then fighting back' (Interview, 2015). Similarly Jane's troubles were transferred to home:

The conflict from school would come home—I would be angry, and I would take my anger back to school. I got to the point where I just wanted to stay in bed of a morning and not go to school because I just don't want to face anything.

(Interview, 2015)

Improvements in managing anger were discussed by students in two related ways: reducing triggers and learning methods of control. Blane talked about how being asked to do something by a teacher triggered his anger: 'Before I came to ReDY I was really getting angry all the time at the smallest things' (Self-reflection, 2012). Dave explained that being away from the mainstream environment made a major difference to his conduct:

Before I entered ReDY I had no control over my anger and conflict resolution.

Since I have been in ReDY I have not really had to worry about my anger because there is little to no triggers for my anger here. (Self-reflection, 2012)

Reflecting on her goal to improve her anger, Sharee stated, 'I am a lot less angry now. I am not sure how I dealt with my anger issues but it's now no longer a problem. I haven't really got any reasons to be angry' (Self-reflection, 2012). Mike's anger was possibly a result of his low resilience. He identified that his depression contributed to his lack of resilience: 'Before I came to ReDY I was very depressed and didn't want to put up with anything or anyone. Now I have escaped my depression and I feel better' (Self-reflection, 2012).

Some students worked specifically on controlling their anger within the program, Sharon, for example would track her progress through her self-reflections:

There was always at least once a day I would go off my crackers, and now I think I'm lucky to do it once a month, but I want to get to the point where nothing at all bothers me. (Self-reflection, 2012)

Similarly Jayden was working to control his anger by identifying triggers that had enraged him in the past:

Before I came to ReDY I was hitting everyone but [being in the program] has shown me how to control my anger and its helping me a lot. I'm at the level where I can almost control myself. I want to be at the point where I can't hurt anyone when they call me names. (Self-reflection, 2012)

Reflecting on his previous violent history, Mark discussed how the explicit anger management counselling in the program had helped:

Working with my anger [in the program], instead of just pushing it aside and not worrying about it helped a great deal, even now today it still helps out. I wouldn't

be where I am now, if I didn't deal with my anger back then. I would have been in a lot more trouble. (Interview, 2015)

Several students reflected on how they managed their anger after they had left the program. Jonno was concerned because there were no triggers for him in the program and he did not know what would happen when faced with a trigger in the mainstream environment. Soon after his return to the host school, he was put to the test:

When I asked [the student] for a hand off the ground he punched me in the face very hard, and I just stood there and looked at him—like I didn't retaliate at all, which before ReDY I just would have retaliated, but I just stood there and thought 'there's no point, I'll just get into trouble'. I just stood there and he kept nagging me to hit him, I just didn't even get angry about it, had a laugh really—it just felt so good! (Interview, 2015)

Sharon described her anger response as a choice: 'I've learned how to manage it. I don't have a problem with it any more ... I'm just like, nah, no point, it's not going to get me anywhere in life' (Interview, 2015). Mark, now holding down two jobs, explained that learning how to manage his anger was directly responsible for the life he was currently enjoying. When asked what had helped him he replied,

I guess going to the roots of my anger, finding out what was making me angry all the time and then dealing with that to start with especially. People had tried to work with me and my anger before, but, they didn't go back to what started it, and what the core if it was, learning what buttons get pressed on me and what happens when they do get pressed helped, I can take myself out of that situation now, or I deal with it in a lot calmer way. (Interview, 2015)

Behaviour Choices. Where anger was seen as beyond a student's control, the fifth theme in this area of behavioural engagement which reflects conduct and compliance

was that students were making deliberate choices to behave the way they did. Students and teachers discussed how before the program poor conduct was a deliberate course of action: 'I just enjoyed doin' it [bullying others]. I think if even I was by myself I would have done it for my own entertainment. Sounds really bad, but that's how it was.' (Jonno, Interview, 2015). Mark also discussed his behaviour as a decision: 'I didn't want to sit and learn all day, I'd rather just run around and be naughty' (Interview, 2015). Mark's teacher also saw his behaviour as a clear choice:

The two key issues are gross disrespect to teachers and the mere fact that Mark can be perfectly behaved in some classes shows that he is quite able to choose to behave or misbehave, depending on the class and the teacher. (School Report, 2009)

Claire, the school principal, saw this as a motivation for establishing the program in the first place. Reflecting on the school before the program existed, she explained, 'there was no attempt to help them to change their behaviour, to help them to change their disposition and their mind set' (Staff Interview, 2015).

The method used to deal with conduct in the program was a version of cognitive behavioural therapy. Whenever students acted inappropriately they were spoken to in private to raise awareness of their action and to discuss ways of making better choices in the future. For Sharon, this method was crucial:

I wouldn't think about it if I wasn't told to ... when we got to sit in that little room and like it was just sitting there and being spoken to about what you've done. It wasn't like 'you've done this wrong' it was being explained to about what you've done and how you can change and stuff. (Interview, 2015)

Josie remembered the meeting room as a safe place: 'The meeting room was really good. It was a time with just you and someone else, like no one else had the

option to walk in' (Interview, 2015). Program teacher Emily discussed the importance of this approach in raising awareness:

Over the time [students] learn that they are in control of their behaviour, that their behaviour is a choice. When they arrive usually they don't have a great awareness of what the problems are and often when they leave they don't recognise—well they see other people as an issue, or other things as an issue. Then when they are leaving, they understand that they are in control of their behaviour and their choices. (Staff Interview, 2015)

Students reflected on being more aware of their behaviour, and saw their actions as choices. Accordingly, conduct was significantly improved after the program compared with before—or, as Janelle put it, 'I don't do as much stupid stuff as I did' (Interview, 2015). For Mark, it wasn't so much a choice to behave: rather he felt that 'I had no reason to be [naughty] 'cos I got on with youse all' (Interview, 2015).

Consequences. The sixth and final theme of the behavioural engagement indicator, conduct, reflected the ways in which students and staff talked about the consequences of poor conduct. Harry's teacher saw punishment as a motivator to work harder: 'Harry is quite capable when he sets his mind to the task at hand. However, too often he is distracted and the only motivation to resume his work is under the threat of another diary note' (School Report, 2010).

Students often reflected on the severity of their behaviour as measured by the consequence. Rather than talking about the impact of his actions on his relationships, for example, Blane explained:

My behaviour wasn't really good up in a mainstream school before I came to ReDY. It was only half way through the year and I had 4 suspensions, 12 lunch

time [detentions] 4 unattended and 2 after school [detentions] which I attend.

(Self-reflection, 2013)

Dan was much more introspective, noting his impact on others:

I did stupid things in class and at home, like yell out inappropriate comments, and do silly things to make people feel bad. I often got myself into trouble by doing this. I often swore or yelled at my mum, my friends, and my teachers. A lot of things that I often did or said got me into big trouble. (Self-reflection, 2014)

For many students detentions and suspensions did not have any impact on their future behaviour choices. Jonno, however, remembered one suspension that mattered to him: 'I sat in the office for the last day of grade six 'cause I got in a fight the week before, so I couldn't be with my friends or nothing' (Interview, 2015).

A significant difference between the program and the mainstream was how inappropriate behaviour was dealt with. In the program there were no detention or suspension consequences. As Paddy explained, 'Now when I'm at ReDY they don't go off at me they talk about it instead and that is what I prefer' (Self-reflection, 2012). This talking involved a very deliberate, structured awareness-raising and solution-based approach to conduct, as Sharon recalled: 'Having support being asked all the time when I'm doing wrong "is that how you want to live your life? Speaking and treating others like that?" This makes me really think and stop' (Self-reflection, 2012). Social educator Ben explained further: 'I think that is very important ... having a discussion with a student about what's happened and trying to allow them to explore the situation themselves and encounter the realisation whether it's acceptable or not' (Interview, 2015).

Another difference the students and staff talked about was focusing on effort, intention and improvement rather than on the behaviour itself. Emily explained how the

approach the program took was to applaud any behaviour change in a positive direction, where ‘swearing at someone and slamming a door might be seen as something to reward, if previously they would have got into a fight’ (Staff Interview, 2015). Harry explained what this felt like from a student point of view:

In the mainstream when I would always get told off I would get angry all the time and I would get sent outside the class. Now in ReDY it’s really good because if you don’t do your homework they don’t get angry, even if you tried and you didn’t finish it. It’s good because you have tried your best and if you need help the teachers will help you at lunch and I feel good here. Now I don’t get angry that much anymore. (Self-reflection, 2011)

In order to achieve this constant ‘relative improvement’ in conduct, Ben explained how regular communication between them, the students and parents was necessary:

It’s important for Emily, James, and myself to maintain that consistency and make sure we’re exactly clear on what the boundaries are. We often discuss things before we say necessarily give a consequence or deal with a situation. So everything is done quite cautiously and a lot of care is taken to make sure that we’re being fair and we’re getting it right and what one person has said is consistent with what another person has said. (Staff Interview, 2015)

Interestingly, for some students the cognitive behaviour approach of talking, raising awareness and offering solutions and strategies was seen as a deterrent in itself. It took time, and was done so often that students were able to predict the sorts of discussion that they were likely to have when they were called over. Jane explained:

If you make a smart comment, or say something out loud in class, they will call you over and talk to you about what’s wrong with it and, I know that a lot of the time when someone was called over, you wouldn’t look over, but you would

know that they were getting told off right now and what they just did was wrong, and they shouldn't have done it. So you learn from watching others getting in trouble, and not to do that, because at the end of the day you're going to be standing over there talking to James and Emily about why you did that, so its best just not to do it anyway. Save yourself the whole conversation... don't do it.

(Interview, 2015)

The approach of having to discuss every aspect of their behaviour was a deterrent for some, like Jane, and simply too hard for others, like Ned who ended up leaving the program: 'Everything I was doing at ReDY was too hard for what I was prepared to do. I didn't care what I was doing the whole time. Like, I didn't give a rat's arse about it' (Interview, 2015).

When Martin finished working as a social educator in the program, he continued as a Teacher Assistant in the mainstream so had a unique window on students as they returned. He commented on program students who had returned to the mainstream:

I would have to say I was very happy with the way they are performing in class.

I've kept a bit of a look out for them ... They have really changed since reengaging back in the mainstream to what they were before ReDY. (Staff Interview, 2015)

Students reflected that their behaviour in the mainstream, measured by the consequences given to them was significantly different, as Mark recalled: 'I was actually getting A's in my diary, which before I was getting D's and F's, I was always getting pink slips and after school detentions—I wasn't getting any of that. I wasn't getting into any trouble whatsoever' (Interview, 2015).

For some students, however, the influences outside the school environment still had a major impact on their behaviour. In an unusual situation, one student, Sean,

returned to the mainstream after leaving the ReDY program without having ‘achieved his goals’ rather than having his behaviour discussed and given strategies for improvement. The mainstream environment meant mainstream consequences for Sean, who according to the principal ‘had issues about truthfulness, he had issues about bullying and aggression and harassment ... So, when he came back into mainstream he continued to do that’ (Claire, Host School Principal, Interview, 2015). Sean was one of two students who were expelled from the host school after returning from the program.

The indicator of conduct and compliance was, unsurprisingly, well documented by teachers and students alike. The change in this element was dramatic, most notably in how students referred to themselves, initially as ‘horrible’, and then as ‘different people’. These labels that students placed upon themselves were subsequently reinforced by some teachers.

Homework completion. The second indicator of behavioural engagement was seen by the extent to which students completed their homework. When homework was discussed in school reports before the program, it was invariably framed in terms of describing a lack of effort or as a method of catching up on missed work. Jacqui’s report, for example, stated that she ‘rarely completes set homework tasks ... If Jacqui is to improve current grades then a detailed study program for home that includes regular, consistent revision of material covered in class is required’ (School Report, 2012). Similarly, Sharee’s teacher observed that ‘there appears to be little being done outside the classroom to consolidate material covered in class’ (School Report, 2009). Harry’s teacher saw that the way for him to improve was independently: ‘Harry has not been completing the majority of the homework that has been set ... he can attain higher grades if he continues his work at home’ (School Report, 2010). Tessa’s teacher considered her lack of homework as one of many indicators of poor engagement: ‘Tessa

has inconsistent work habits. At times, she has good concentration and application, but, too often, she is not listening attentively and is off task. Her results reflect this.

Homework and classroom tasks are rarely completed on time' (School Report, 2009).

Students echoed the same level of engagement with completing homework tasks before the program. Christie explained that she felt disconnected from the tasks and the teachers setting them:

I never did homework, class assignments or in class work I would sit there and draw, because I feel like a number on a class roll rather than a student, teachers didn't notice or care if I handed work or not so I didn't really care if I did the work or not they would never follow it up. (Self-reflection, 2013)

Drew also reflected that before the program he 'never did homework'. Through the program, however, he changed his behaviour in this respect, indicating a change in engagement: 'You have to put something in to it to get something back out of it. I feel that doing my homework you actually learn something out of doing it' (Self-reflection, 2011).

Ben, the social educator, explained that doing homework was 'a good sign of where the students are engaging in the program or willing to learn because that's when there's certainly not a teacher there to say you've got to get this done' (Staff Interview, 2015). Consistent with the approach taken throughout the program, staff used engagement with homework as a way of making students aware of the impacts of their behavioural choices. Jane described a situation where, rather than punishing her for not completing the set task, the staff would be

sitting down and asking you why didn't I do my homework the night before, and what's going on and if it was a social situation then they would ask about that and it would be sorted, and then my homework would be sorted. (Interview, 2015)

Working through the reasons underlying obstacles for learning was one technique used in the program. Another was the internal motivation that came with academic success: ‘School is helping me with my work and I’m now for the first time in my life I’m doing my homework’ (Jimmy, Self-reflection, 2010).

As well as homework being a sign of increased behavioural engagement, it had a flow-on effect to the student’s self-concept and general enjoyment of school:

When someone gets on the bus in the morning when I pick them up and they’ve done their homework and they’re proud of themselves ... they’re actually proud of themselves for completing homework tasks and looking forward to the day ahead (Ben, Staff Interview, 2015).

For the ReDY program staff, achieving academically was not an indication of working on the goals set by the student. Program teacher James recounted the story of Bob, whom he described as an ‘incredibly bright student’ who had set himself the goal of reaching his academic potential. For this to be achieved the staff set tasks, including homework tasks, to help him work towards his capacity. James explained, however, that Bob was not completing his homework:

[I] said to him, ‘it doesn’t matter how intelligent you are. If you’re not actually willing to do anything, it’s not going to amount to anything’. He decided that it was all a bit too hard and he didn’t want to work hard, and so he left the program. (Staff Interview, 2015)

In this way, staff in the ReDY program saw the extent to which students did their homework as a barometer of their level of behavioural engagement in the program, regardless of the academic level of the student.

Students did not reflect specifically on the extent that they did their homework tasks on return to mainstream, whether at the host school or at one of the colleges. It can

be inferred from their successful completion of secondary school that they continued to engage at least at a minimum level. Where comments appeared in the school reports after the program, they indicated a positive approach: ‘She has completed most homework tasks and has prepared well for assessments’ (Janelle, School Report, 2014). Jonno’s teacher reported that he had ‘a positive work ethic and willingness to seek assistance when needed. He has made genuine effort to complete tasks on time, and consistently has completed his homework on time. Jonno was very attentive during class instructions and was very self-disciplined’ (School Report, 2014).

Participation. The third indicator of behavioural engagement is how, and how much, students participated in class. The dominant theme that emerged was that lack of participation equated to lack of effort. A second theme developed demonstrating that some students participated selectively in some subject areas, or parts of subjects, indicating that types of learning were important to the engagement of the students.

Lack of participation = lack of effort. The first theme showed that, overwhelmingly, teachers perceived low participation in class as low engagement and low effort. It was reported that Jayden, for example, ‘has put little effort into any aspect of the course. He has completed no assignments and has performed poorly on tests. He completes very little work in class and offers to answer no questions during discussion time’ (School Report, 2012). For both Sharee and Tegan, the lack of participation was related directly to their underachievement in the subject: ‘Sharee’s lack of work and contribution in class is impeding her progress’ (School Report, 2009), while Tegan, who was failing, ‘seldom participated actively in the work of the lessons’ (School Report, 2010).

Jane reflected that in mainstream classes she

wasn't asking for help because I was afraid of looking stupid, sometimes when I finish my maths class I feel like I should go and tell [the teacher] that I didn't understand that, but if the bell goes I just walk out the door and go to lunch because I think that I will never be good at maths. (Interview, 2015)

Rather than lack of effort, Jane attributed her lack of participation to a lack of social confidence. Some students felt that their lack of confidence was actually a symptom of more severe mental health issues. Brigid, for example, suffered from social anxiety, and Mike from clinical depression. Both entered the ReDY program after being unable to attend school for over a term because of these conditions. In Brigid's last report while she was still attending mainstream, her teachers suggested that 'she could contribute more in class discussion, committing more of herself and her thinking to the co-operative process of learning' [and] 'needs to contribute more to class discussions, to show her understanding of concepts covered.' One teacher observed that she was 'reluctant to share work with the class.' And another described her as a generally disinterested student who 'rarely contributes to discussion' (School Report, 2010).

Mike's report was similar:

He has shown little ability to participate in class discussions nor does he ask for or readily accept help ... which shows lack of effort in his studies. Mike will seriously need to reconsider his study habits and the amount of effort he is putting into Science if he hopes to pass' (School Report, 2011).

Janelle attributed her unwillingness to participate to her suffering a recent trauma which resulted in: 'always sleeping and I never participated in anything' (Self-reflection, 2013). Looking behind the reasons for non-participation emerged as a crucial mechanism for how the program reengaged students behaviourally. Janelle illustrated

this change: ‘Now I am always at school, I haven’t missed a day in so long, I also participate in everything with a positive attitude’ (Self-reflection, 2013).

Martin, a ReDY Social Educator, explained that

ReDY wasn’t just for ... badly behaved children...I think that the program had a very high success rate with regards to those people who were just uncomfortable in a mainstream situation, whether it be they just didn’t want to turn up to school, through personal issues, or they just had anxiety around other people. The success rate there all told would be quite high in that regard. I think because they just had a feeling of being comfortable in that group, because it was a smaller group of people. (Interview, 2015)

For Brigid, the acceptance of her social anxiety as an aspect of her mental health that could be improved, rather than a judgement of her general interest, made a huge difference. This adult learning approach, where individual circumstance was acknowledged and worked with, appeared to empower her:

I think it’s because while you’re there you get treated like an adult, like more so than in the mainstream school and you have more of a choice over what you do and therefore you feel like you need to do the things because you chose it, you wanted to do the things. (Interview, 2015)

Josie identified the atmosphere in the smaller environment as beneficial to her participation: ‘There was just one class, probably 10 students so during the time you got to know each other and you became friends with everyone. You weren’t around anyone else, you had your own kind of space’ (Interview, 2015).

It certainly appeared that participation in class activities improved considerably for some students during the program, and continued after. School reports of students who returned to mainstream classes were overwhelmingly positive about class

participation: ‘Blane’s willingness to offer answers to questions I ask of the class is to be applauded’ (School Report, 2014); ‘Janelle has been a willing participant in class discussions and activities’ (School Report, 2014); ‘Jonno is a great contributor in Physical Education classes. He participates in all activities and is a valuable team member’ (School Report, 2014); ‘Sharon’s contributions to group discussion are welcomed and valued and I encourage her to keep this up’ (School Report, 2013). The only example of a report of a returned student not reflecting positive participation was from a teacher of Jacqui’s who reported that ‘her willingness to seek out help has not been a strong point this semester. An area that needs improvement is her in class productivity. She is urged to participate in classroom activities’ (School Report, 2014). This exception may be explained by Jacqui’s disability status due to her low cognitive ability.

Participation in practical subjects. An interesting theme that emerged from some of the school reports was that participation appeared to be selective for some students. For many students, teachers reported ‘excellent contribution’ in one subject and ‘does not participate’ in others. Students reflected that they engaged in subjects that ‘they liked’. Another level of selective participation was illustrated in John’s school reports where across several subjects it was reported that ‘John has participated enthusiastically in all of the practical activities and learning tasks’ and ‘John enjoys the practical components of this subject and he is keen and motivated when doing experiments’ (School Report, 2009). However, his participation in the theoretical components of the subjects were considered to be ‘disruptive’ and ‘off task’.

Many students talked about how they learned how to contribute in the ReDY classes. Janelle reflected that ‘the things that help me are that I understand things and

that I ask a lot more questions now than I did before and that's helping me understand. Asking how to do something will definitely help me' (Self-reflection, 2012).

Attendance. Student attendance was the fourth and final indicator of behavioural engagement. Change in attendance, measured quantitatively before, during and after enrolment in the program, demonstrated a significant increase which was maintained after students returned to mainstream. Qualitatively, comments surrounding attendance were common in school reports before enrolment in the ReDY program, and in the self-reflections of students who had highlighted increasing attendance as an issue they wished to improve. A dominant theme emerging from the school reports was that some teachers considered that students needed to make up for their time away from class in order to demonstrate a higher degree of commitment to learning. The second theme, very dominant, was that regular attendance and academic success were inseparable. A distinction is made in this study between low attendance and disconnection: lack of attendance as a behavioural element of (dis)engagement includes students' turning up late for school, missing lessons and truanting. Disconnection is viewed as when a student stops coming to school as a final result of disengagement.

Attendance as a choice, commitment or responsibility. The first theme that emerged in this indicator of behavioural engagement was that teachers saw regular school attendance as solely the responsibility of the student; the repercussions of not attending needed to be made up for by completing missed work outside school time. Cody's teachers saw that he needed a 'commitment to completing missed work when absent' (School Report, 2009). Josie's teachers reported that '[she needs to make] a commitment to completing missed work due to absences' (School Report, 2009). In Ewan's case, his teachers described him as 'failing' to complete tasks after being chronically absent, adding that 'when submitted, his assessment tasks lack care and

attention to detail'. His science teacher made it very clear that 'to achieve in Science, Ewan needs to take responsibility for his own learning' (School Report, 2009).

Despite students having missed large numbers of classes and consequently falling behind, teachers had an expectation that they should be able to engage with, and understand, the content upon their return to class. This is illustrated by Tegan's teacher reporting that:

When she has attended classes she has chosen not to engage in the learning process. On the few occasions she has participated in an effective manner she has shown some understanding, however formal assessment has been unattainable because of her poor attendance. (School Report, 2010)

Similarly, Sharee 'missed several classes this term and her absences have impacted on her marks. Her application and effort in term one was below expectation despite encouragement' (School Report, 2009). The expectation of high engagement in a subject after absence was matched by the expectation of high work output: 'Given some absences the completion of work has been slow. All of class time must be utilised effectively so that she does not fall further behind' (School Report of Sharee, 2009). Regarding her lack of work output due to absences, Marcia was told that she needed 'to rectify this current situation immediately'. Advice given to Ewan was also clear: 'Any work missed after long absences should be keenly followed up on'.

In the ReDY program there was a very deliberate focus on addressing the issues behind low attendance and disconnection. This was done in a practical and individualised way. Ben, who drove the ReDY program's minibus each morning to collect ReDY program students from their homes, explained that

it takes out any challenges or barriers of actually physically getting to and from school, to home, in that that transport is provided. They are picked up literally

from their front door and then brought to school. So it's another thing that makes it easier for them to actually physically get to school. (Interview, 2015)

For Cody, this was all he needed: 'Before I entered ReDY, I was going to school once in a blue moon. But when I joined ReDY I was coming every day almost without fail' (Self-reflection, 2011). Claire, the school principal, recognised that the way that chronic absenteeism had been addressed in the mainstream had been inadequate. 'We had young people here who, had been out of school for over 100 days, kids who just weren't turning up and they weren't being followed through ... standard conventional efforts had been made and they didn't work' (Interview, 2015). Josie recalled how it needed to be made explicit for her:

I have been told by [program staff] to look at [nonattendance] in different ways ...

I would not learn anything and would be behind. So I am trying to look at it in that way so I now try my hardest to show up at school as best as I can every day all day. (Self-Reflection, 2010)

Apart from providing the program bus, part of helping students with their low attendance rates was explicit coaching on how to cope with the various aspects of their lives that made attendance difficult. For example, Ewan would never come to school when he had 'health problems'. Many of these problems, he came to realise, were possible to manage while remaining productive at school. The skill he learned was the ability to distinguish between issues that would prohibit attendance and those that would not: 'I think I have learnt how to tell the difference between a problem and major problem' (Self-reflection, 2010). Another mechanism was the individual attention given to each student. If students did not attend they were called directly and asked for their reasons for nonattendance. If the reason was valid, for example ill health, students were given support to get to a doctor. More often than not, Emily explained, the conversation

would result in the student attending that day (Staff interview, 2014). The student would then be counselled on how to cope with the issue that was affecting their attendance.

Students also talked about their desire to attend the ReDY program because they enjoyed coming, as Christie explained: 'Before I came to ReDY I would find it hard and over whelming to come to school. Now I am in a small classroom and can get help when I need it faster I am doing better' (Self-reflection, 2013). Sharee saw that she enjoyed the schooling experience more:

I now am finding it easier to attend school every day. I used to have that much trouble just getting out of bed in the morning which sometimes I still do but now I am able to get up every morning. (Self-reflection, 2010)

School reports mentioning absenteeism after the program were noticeable only by their absence. None of the students who returned to the host school had comments about their lack of attendance in the year after the program. Janelle found it difficult to explain why this was the case: 'I think it's gotten easier to come to school mostly because ... I dunno, after ReDY I just come to school a lot more' (Interview, 2015). Ewan, Brigid and Mike who went on to college, commented that the choice in their school and their subjects made a big difference. 'At ReDY I worked out that I wanted to continue education and I learned that going to ReDY, and yeah, I just wanted to go to college' (Mike, Interview, 2015). Ewan talked enthusiastically about going to college after the program:

Loved it, just loved it. Just that at college I had 100% choice over what I wanted to study, which at that point I was really interested in business and economics and that's what I enrolled in, and that was great. (Interview, 2015)

For many students, overcoming absences had a direct link with their self-concept, as Mia exemplified: ‘I have greatly improved my attendance and I am very proud of myself not missing any days this year’ (Self-reflection, 2014).

Attendance responsible for marks. A second theme that emerged was the perception of a very clear link between attendance and achievement, as reported by one of Josie’s teachers: ‘Josie has struggled to achieve in this subject this year due to the large amount of absences she has had from school’ (School Report, 2009). Often this connection was a practical one; for example, one teacher observed that ‘Ewan has been absent for most lessons. It is essential that Ewan attends more lessons to enable future progress [as] chronic absenteeism is hindering his progress. A number of the criteria have not been able to be assessed’ (School Report, 2009). Similarly, because Marcia had been away her teacher found that it had been ‘difficult obtaining any form of work for assessment’ (School Report, 2009). In some reports, teachers provided an explanation of their inability to grade a student: ‘Tegan’s lack of attendance has made it impossible to confidently give an assessment of her true ability’ and ‘due to Ewan’s extended absence from [class] it is very difficult for me to have assessed his work’ (School Report, 2009). The absence from school itself—as something to blame for lack of achievement—was best exemplified by a report on Cody, who had ‘huge amounts of potential and it is such a shame that his absences ... have prevented him from being a successful student’ (School Report, 2009).

As well as recognising the importance of attending to achieving academically, Norm saw that his life prospects would be improved by increased attendance at school. Norm reflected that this realisation was in part learned through the experience of his unemployed older brother, who ‘always says “make sure you get to school and get the grades you need and don’t end up like me”. And I try my hardest not to’ (Self-

reflection, 2010). As he moved through the program, however, Norm saw that regular attendance was a skill in itself:

I try to get to school every day, when I went to [a work skills] program I was the most consistent student there and always on time, I try to do the same here, treat school as if it is real life work, compulsory—or fired, this gives me motivation every day to get up out of bed and don't be lazy, finish my school life off on a positive note without any hassles, who wants to finish grade 10 badly? I most certainly don't. (Self-reflection, 2010)

Mary described the necessity for attending: 'I don't really have trouble with attendance at school anymore as I know that I need to be here, and to learn. I am grade 10 and my exams will be coming up soon' (Self-reflection, 2011).

Behavioural engagement summary. The four indicators of behavioural engagement offer a way to understand the complexity behind the students' disengagement and subsequent reengagement in this dimension. By investigating student reports as well as staff and student self-reflections and interviews, changes in engagement in each of the elements have been observed.

The most visible indicator in this dimension was that of students' conduct. Students' non-compliance with rules and inappropriate behaviour were major concerns to teachers, according to their reports, and to the students who saw themselves as naughty, bad and disruptive. It was apparent that once students had deemed themselves to be a negative influence on their peers, they continued to be a disruption in class. Although conduct was the first visible element of disengagement in the behavioural dimension, it appeared to be a consequence of having first disengaged in the affective or cognitive dimensions. This is an important finding, as it suggests that all the elements of

behavioural disengagement act as consequences of disengagement in other areas, rather than as precursors to it.

In the ReDY program, behavioural engagement was discussed and reviewed explicitly. Appropriate methods of participation and collaboration, strategies for engaging with homework, and attending regularly were integral to the program. Conduct was also reviewed explicitly, albeit by very different methods to those experienced by students in the mainstream environment. The findings demonstrate that private discussion with students about behavioural issues was both effective and, perhaps surprisingly, appreciated and even enjoyed by them.

Summary of Qualitative Findings

The qualitative data demonstrated change in engagement across all three dimensions, cognitive, affective and behavioural. The data were sourced from comments written by teachers before students entered the ReDY program and after they returned to the host school, plus self-reflections from students written within the ReDY program, and student and staff interviews.

Cognitive dimension. Qualitative data suggested positive change in each of the three indicators of cognitive engagement: perceptions of competency, willingness to engage with classroom tasks, and the establishment of task-oriented and learning goals.

- Before the ReDY program students perceived that they were either academically inadequate or had missed too much work to be able to complete necessary tasks in class. This compared to a higher perception of competency during, and after ReDY, largely attributable to the individual focus and sense of achievement students found within the program.
- Lower perception of competency led to disengagement in other areas. When students had low perceptions of competency, there was evidence of less

willingness to engage in classroom tasks, less participation, and poorer conduct.

- Before the ReDY program students reported less willingness to engage compared with during and after. Students ‘gave up’ because they did not feel that they were achieving. They also saw significant barriers to their learning such as social pressures, anxiety or family problems. These ‘barriers’ were seen to be reduced by the ‘whole student approach’ taken by the program.
- Students’ motivation to engage in classroom tasks increased while they were in the program, partly because mainstream consequences for not engaging were removed. This motivation to engage in learning appeared to continue after students left the program and the school.
- Before the program, establishing task-oriented goals was identified as a low priority for students and teachers compared with other indicators of disengagement. Students’ success in setting and pursuing goals became more evident during and after the program as a result of higher confidence in their own ability and a greater sense of enjoyment of school.
- Learning goals for students, such as increasing concentration, were suggested by teachers before the program, although little direction was found on methods students might use to enact these suggestions.

Affective dimension. Qualitative data suggest positive changes in all five indicators of affective engagement: students’ enjoyment of school, sense of belonging, attitude towards school, interest in schoolwork, and value of education.

- The extent to which students enjoyed school had flow-on affects to their levels of engagement in other areas. If students did not enjoy school they were less likely to attend or participate; in addition, they had a more negative attitude

towards school, did not feel like they belonged, and often displayed poor conduct.

- Students' enjoyment of school is a complex theme. It can be seen as an indicator of engagement which is influenced by students' relationships with their teachers and peers, and an assortment of individual wellbeing and health issues.
- How the individual impacts of school enjoyment were managed by the school and program played a large part in whether further student disengagement occurred.
- Before the ReDY program some students did not feel like they belonged, and this was reinforced by the language used by teachers in school reports.
- Students had a greater sense of belonging when they saw that staff valued them as individuals and catered for their needs.
- Students' attitudes were identified as influencing their level of success. Improved attitude was used by host school teachers as an explanation for improved achievement and engagement.
- Students' interest in schoolwork was perceived as being 'owned' by teachers. If students were not interested it was perceived as an indication of poor teaching, rather than the internal motivation of the students.
- Continued engagement in school was identified by the students as important for two reasons. First it was as a necessary step towards further education and eventually employment, and secondly there was a belief that education led to a better life.

Behavioural dimension. The qualitative data suggest that positive changes occurred in all four indicators of behavioural engagement, conduct, homework completion, participation, and attendance.

- Students' conduct was affected by the students' self-concept, their relationships with peers, and their relationships with teachers.
- How students' anger and poor conduct were managed by the school and the program had an impact on engagement. If the management of anger and poor conduct was perceived to be unfair, further disengagement would ensue; conversely, if the approach was seen as individual and fair, the relationship between the student and the staff would strengthen.
- It was reported in the teachers' interviews that both in the school and in the ReDY program there was a perception that conduct was a student's choice.
- The right type and amount of participation was necessary for stronger student engagement. Too much, too little, or selective participation was considered undesirable by some mainstream teachers.
- If a student did not participate it was interpreted by some mainstream teachers as a lack of effort. The survey results demonstrate, however, that there were many reasons why a student might choose not to participate, such as social anxiety, depression or a low perception of competence.
- Attendance was also interpreted as a choice of the students by mainstream teachers, and the consequence of not attending was the responsibility of that student to rectify.
- Regular attendance was attributed to both academic achievement in the host school and goal achievement within the ReDY program.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Student engagement with schooling is considered to be a process that changes over time, is multidimensional, and is, in part, dependent on the relationship between the students and their teachers (Aron, 2003a; Henrich, 2005; Te Riele, 2007). This study investigated the experiences of students identified as disengaging from school who entered an alternative educational program and, in most cases, returned to a mainstream educational environment.

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from students before they entered the Reengagement for Disengaged Youth (ReDY) program, during the program, and after they left the program by returning either to their host school or to some other destination. These data were then coded into the three dimensions of engagement: cognitive, affective and behavioural. The results were analysed with the aim of answering the two research questions underpinning this study:

- To what extent, and in what ways, was the ReDY program effective?
- For participating students, did this effectiveness extend across the cognitive, behavioural and affective dimensions of engagement?

One of the key findings for this research is that students' engagement with both mainstream school and alternative education can be reviewed using a multiple dimensions framework (cognitive, affective and behavioural) as suggested by Fredricks et al. (2004). Each dimension is considered to have several sub-elements. This multi-dimensional framework shifts the argument about the effectiveness of alternative programs away from a one-dimensional perspective where, for example, effectiveness is measured by achievement or post-program destination. Using both surveys and interviews enabled the research questions to be investigated and reviewed from a number of perspectives.

By investigating students' engagement before, during and after enrolment in the ReDY program, this research has been able to provide a greater understanding of student engagement as a process, rather than as a static concept (Ysseldyke et al., 2006). As noted in the results, each of the three dimensions can change over time and so are considered to have malleability (Callingham, 2013; Christenson et al., 2012; Fredricks, 2014; Fredricks et al., 2004; Zyngier, 2008). The results of this research lend support to Finn's (1993) argument that student engagement needs to be considered as a development process that is shaped and formed over time by the cumulative experiences that the student has with teachers and others in the school and home environments.

The relationship that the students in this research had with their teachers was found to be a critical variable in understanding students' level of engagement and disengagement from school. This finding is consistent with the research of McMahon and Portelli (2004) who also claimed that when teachers undertake particular practices, or exhibit particular dispositions, the level of student engagement increases.

In terms of the macro findings, this research supports the hypothesis that alternative educational programs do have a place in education—that is, providing the program is based on sound pedagogical principles, is goal focused, is resourced, and is student centred, so that the students in those programs can benefit from the experience and the opportunity. This finding is similar to that noted by De Jong and Griffiths (2006, p. 31).

Rather than supporting a narrowing of alternative education placements, the findings from this research lend support to the argument that alternative programs need to be on a continuum of support level to better accommodate the diversity of students typically located in schools (Rix & Twining, 2007; Ysseldyke et al., 2006) and this continuum is multidimensional, involving the interaction of cognitive, affective and

behavioural student engagement variables (Ackerman, 1992; Christenson et al., 2012). In the following section, aspects of the students' cognitive, affective and behavioural changes resulting from their involvement in the alternative education program will be reviewed. However, it needs to be acknowledged, as noted in the results section of this thesis, that the separation of these dimensions into discrete elements is difficult and in reality are highly interactive and mutually dependent.

Cognitive Engagement

The results demonstrate a significant change in cognitive engagement from before the program, during, and after return to mainstream education, in each of the three indicators: perceptions of competency, willingness to engage, and the establishment of goals (Fredricks et al., 2004). The students in the ReDY program reported that they considered themselves more academically competent after participation in the program compared with their perceptions of competence in their host school. The ReDY students, and their teachers reported these changes through the various data sources that have been interpreted using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Cox (2010) noted that disengaged students in her case study originally had significantly lower educational confidence than students in the mainstream school, but by the completion of their program had acquired greater academic and educational confidence. She suggested that these changes were a consequence of three factors: change in the relationship between students and the teachers in the program; the program and its setting, where the students were more central to their own learning goals and the group process encouraged the students to talk and reflect on their learning and goal setting; and the enhanced level of academic success in the alternative program compared to the mainstream program. The interview student data obtained on the alternative education

program evaluated in the current study similarly suggests that these three factors facilitated a positive outcome for the students who participated.

Students in the ReDY program reported that they were more willing to work in the alternative learning context because they had a greater say in selecting their learning tasks and goals. Improvements in students' willingness to work in class is related to students' level of self-efficacy in class: Hattie (2013) reported that improved levels of self-efficacy and willingness to try were factors associated with students' improved academic performance and connectedness with schooling. The claim that students who are disengaged from school are somehow inherently lazy is a myth (Te Riele, 2000), although the evidence from this study is that these students may be unmotivated learners in a particular classroom setting and in that context may invest lower levels of effort in their learning, particularly if they are uncertain of the outcome (Te Riele, 2000).

The results from this study support the case that the ReDY program was able to do what Zyngier (2011) referred to as removing some of the barriers to students' education, with a more student-centred approach to learning and a more supportive learning environment. Gilmore and Boulton-Lewis (2009) also noted that students who learned at different rates and through different teaching techniques typically benefitted from alternative educational programs. In the ReDY program the students were, in co-operation with their teachers, able to select their learning tasks and learning goals. In addition, they were able to form a mutually agreed time when those tasks were to be complete, with the students able to review and reflect with their teachers on the strategies they could use to achieve these learning goals and tasks. This process of students working in a cooperative context with their teachers is considered by Zyngier (2011a) to be important because it gives the students a greater sense of control and power over their learning and shifts thinking about disengaging students from a deficit

model to an empowering model. This idea that successful reengagement programs rely on students challenging the deficit view of their schooling and ‘re-igniting’ their educational and life aspirations is also articulated by Smyth et al. (2013) .

Affective Engagement

In this research affective engagement was investigated through five indicators: enjoyment of school, interest, sense of belonging, attitude, and valuing of education. On the questions of ‘school was a good place to be’, and ‘I enjoyed my time at high school’ the ReDY students were more positive in their responses during and after their experience in the program than they were before.

Students’ level of enjoyment of school has been demonstrated by Abbott-Chapman et al. (2013) to influence students’ future educational and career choices. The finding that students who participated in the ReDY program did indeed appear to ‘bounce back’ from their initial levels of disengagement with schooling and were able to reconnect with their schooling also suggests that affective dimensions influence students’ ongoing learning and choices about their education.

The finding that students in this study were able to re-engage with schooling is in contrast to some other research findings, which have reported more negative outcomes of alternative programs. In particular, Bouhours and Bryer (2004) noted that alternative programs alone could not assist students to reconnect with mainstream schooling. The authors argued that interventions failed to overcome ‘the transactional and snowballing nature of risks in [students’] negative development trajectories and ... failed to accommodate the role of multi-contextual and multi-systemic sources of failure’ [for students] (Bouhours & Bryer, 2004, p. 114). This difference in findings suggests that there is no one common alternative educational program, or one common cohort of students who participate in these programs, or even a common criterion of what is a

successful student outcome. The findings in this study are not suggesting that alternative programs are a panacea for all the ills of schooling experienced by some students. Nor is it saying that the solution to student disengagement is simple and does not involve an array of interactive home, teacher, resourcing, and student variables. Rather, the findings in this study say that in some cases, and under some conditions, alternative education can be effective for many of the students who participate. Many of the students who participated in this study had both school and home (multi-contextual) problems and, in some cases multi-systemic (various schools, family services) failures. The ReDY program attempted to provide the students with counselling services and family support, but this is not to suggest that the students or their home situations are 'fixed.' At best the evidence is that many of the students developed better coping skills and were able to develop strategies that assisted them to transition back into mainstream schooling and rationalise their educational trajectories.

Teacher Relationships

The students in this study spoke of the importance of the teacher–student relationship and how this helped them to gain a sense of belonging in the ReDY program and influenced their schooling goals. Other researchers have similarly commented that the teacher–student relationship is a major factor in students' sense of belonging to alternative programs and their process within these programs (Holdsworth, 2004; McGregor & Mills, 2012; Smyth et al., 2013; Te Riele, 2006). On this point, Hattie (2013) argued that positive teacher–student relationship is one of the most important factors across all educational settings and for all students. A positive teacher–student relationship is not a unique feature of alternative education programs (although it is an important one), but it is a characteristic of effective teaching regardless of the location or setting of that instruction (Hattie, 2013). As Te Riele (2006) stated, 'the

friendly attitude of teachers [is] not a minor benefit for students but [makes] a genuine difference to their education' (p. 64). The results from this study suggest that an increase in students' sense of belonging to their schooling and an increase in their sense of connectedness with their teachers, which are affective variables, indirectly and directly influence their learning and behaviour.

Anxiety and stress

It must be acknowledged that there was variability of outcomes across the cohort of students who participated in this study and not all students reported that they belonged in the ReDY program or connected with its purpose. Nine students, or 20% of the cohort, left before they completed the goals they had set themselves. Of these nine, the three who consented to be interviewed reported that they had gained from the experience despite leaving early and going to another school. For these three students the ReDY program seemed to give them 'time out' from a less than positive educational experience, and an opportunity to evaluate where they were going. This notion, that alternative programs can provide students who are stressed and anxious in a typical classroom with some form of respite and 'time out', is an important consideration. Triplett and Barksdale (2005) argued that schools have become too focused on narrowing the classroom curriculum to fit high-stakes testing to the detriment of students' wellbeing, increasing their anxiety and stress levels. Similarly, Peters and Oliver (2009), argued that alternative education had an important place in schooling as a counterweight to the increased standardisation of educational practices brought about by standardised assessment practices, which at the classroom level was leading to higher levels of 'disregard of differences in the needs, talents and achievements of different students, especially those from minorities and those with disabilities and special education needs' (p. 273).

Three students with diagnosed social anxiety entered the ReDY program. In this space away from some of the pressures of the host school all three students completed the program and went on to finish compulsory schooling. This evidence demonstrates that within the ReDY program, these students developed coping mechanisms that were transferrable to the mainstream context.

Peers

The results of this research highlight the importance that peers often play in students' affective engagement and so in their educational engagement. In particular, the students' survey results revealed the importance that students placed on getting along with their peers, while the qualitative interview results also showed that classroom peers were a major influence on students' level of enjoyment of school. This finding links with Fredricks' (2014) research which identified that in-school peer relationships played an important part in students' engagement with school and was influential in determining the degree of a student's engagement with school. Students who reported higher levels of peer rejection also reported lower levels of school connectedness (Troop-Gordon & Ladd, 2005), and stronger educational engagement has been linked to more positive school peer friendships (Wentzel, Baker, & Russell, 2009). Troop-Gordon and Ladd (2005) argued that adolescent students were susceptible to peer pressure and were concerned about being accepted or rejected, and this influenced their behaviour and feelings of self-worth, especially if bullying occurred in the school. In this research some students did report bullying had occurred before they entered the ReDY program; even so, most talked about the positive influence their peers had on their schooling.

Behavioural Engagement

Change in participating students' level of behavioural engagement was analysed through the four indicators of behavioural engagement: conduct, attendance, participation and homework. Overall, the results reveal that the students behaved significantly differently after the ReDY program than they did before. Part of the reason for this may have been the change in their perceptions of themselves. The results demonstrate that the students described themselves in more negative terms before the program, but held more positive perceptions of themselves at the end of the ReDY program. During the program students appeared in part to re-imagine themselves in what Smyth and McInerney (2012) have described as a 'reclamation of self-belief and agency' (p. 48). In the interviews individual students reported 'becoming somebody different', and 'not needing' to misbehave any more to gain the respect of others.

Students' classroom attendance increased significantly during the ReDY program compared with their level of attendance previously. The idea that lower levels of school attendance are associated with higher levels of school disconnection as noted in this study is important to recognise. It suggests that rather than considering low attendance as a problem, it is more usefully considered a warning sign, a signal that this student is becoming at risk and likely needs additional support. Poor school attendance is a good predictor of personal wellbeing issues, home and family problems, as well as school related issues (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p. 308), and understanding the causes of a student's low attendance enables teachers and others in the school to better find a effective response.

That school attendance increased while students were in the ReDY program is a positive finding. It suggests that the students were responding in a positive way to an

educational program that could offer flexibility in delivery of the curriculum and at the same time allow the students to take greater ownership of their learning and behaviour.

Improved attendance was maintained after students returned to the mainstream and were once more in a larger, less ‘interpersonally intense’ school. This longevity in outcome is inconsistent with criticisms of alternative education programs having ‘at best a temporary’ success (Raywid, 1999).

A summary of the key findings across the three outcome dimensions of cognitive, affective and behavioural engagement is presented in Table 34.

Table 34

Summary of change in engagement across the three dimensions

Data Collected	Cognitive	Affective	Behavioural
Before	Students had poor perceptions of competency. Students had given up trying in classes. Teachers often described students as not willing to put in effort.	Some students could not manage anger or anxiety. Students did not enjoy school. Often students did not get on with teachers or peers.	Attendance was low. Teachers often described students as disruptive (and so did the students).
During	Students stated that they could do the work required. Students were interested and motivated by the type of work they undertook. Students appreciated the higher staffing ratios. Staff expected students to put in effort to improve. Staff designed learning to be appropriate for students' level.	Students reported their teachers cared about them. Students learnt techniques to work with their anger and anxiety. Students reported being more positive about themselves. Students were given specific help with individual socio-emotional needs.	Students' attendance increased. Students were 'happy' about the Behaviour Management system. Students said there was 'less reason' for poor conduct. There was a 'culture' of behaving well. Students were instructed about how to participate more effectively.
After	Students reported increases in their perceptions of competency and willingness to engage. Standardised tests increased; grades did not decrease. Teachers' ratings of students' 'work ethic' increased. Teachers' comments on students' cognitive engagement were more positive.	Teachers' comments on students' affective engagement were more positive. Students reported enjoying school more. Students reported that they had less trouble managing anger and anxiety.	Students' attendance increased and stayed high. Students completed school. Poor conduct was less of an issue. Teachers' ratings of students' willingness to 'treat others with respect' increased.

Reviewing the Three-Dimensional Model

This study built upon the work of researchers like Abbott-Chapman et al. (2013), Appleton et al. (2006), Archambault et al. (2009), Christenson et al. (2012) and Fredricks et al. (2004) who developed and worked with models of engagement consisting of cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions. What has been attempted in this research is to apply the three-dimensional model to a case study to investigate the engagement of individuals in an alternative program, and this has allowed a deep, nuanced understanding of students' engagement with their schooling. The findings support the claim by Te Riele, Wilson, Wallace, McGinty and Lewthwaite (2016) that students' outcomes are multidimensional and have to be understood in context.

The results demonstrate how the three-dimensional model can be used to identify the different ways in which students' disengage. The issue is that too often the phrase 'disengaged youth' is used as a collective to describe all students who enter alternative education programs, although as noted in this research there is a diversity of 'types' of disengaged students. For example, Janosz et al. (2000) focused on academic disengagement, but as noted in this research the reality is that the dimensions of students' behaviour and affect cannot be easily separated from their cognitive dimensions.

Patterns in the Process of Engagement

Students' level of engagement with schooling needs to be conceptualised as a malleable process, rather than as a fixed and single event. This has direct implications for both practice and further research. In this study, understanding students' engagement before, during and after the program provided a clearer account of when and how reengagement occurred. Further to this, understanding the interactivity of cognitive,

affective and behavioural engagement across time gave insight into the personal nature of disengagement and reengagement for the students, and into the mechanisms that reduced or increased engagement for them.

This study used both qualitative and quantitative research techniques and multi-data points to review the effectiveness of an alternative program. Others have relied more on qualitative techniques: Mills and McGregor (2013) and Smyth and McInerney (2012), for instance, reported on successful alternative education programs using only student interviews. The technique of using a single point measure was developed by Aron (2003) to investigate attendance or outcome destination of the students, and by Gutherson et al. (2011) who investigated changes in criminal activity. It is the claim of this research that using both qualitative and quantitative research techniques and multi-data points provides the researcher with richer data that allows deeper insights into the processes of students' engagement and disengagement.

The Process of Disengaging

Researchers have attempted to map the process of disengagement and reengagement for several decades. The seminal writings of Finn (1989) focused on students' affective dimension, critiquing a traditional 'frustration–self-esteem' model. Others have built upon Finn's work, including Appleton et al. (2006), Archambault et al. (2009), Janosz et al. (2000), Stefansson, Gestsdottir, Geldhof, Skulason, and Lerner (2015) and Christenson et al. (2012). Essentially, the frustration–self-esteem model suggests that students first become frustrated due to cognitive disengagement, and this leads to poor self-esteem, or affective disengagement. This poor self-esteem in turn leads to what Finn (1989) calls 'problem behaviour'. Finn's own model, the participation–identification model suggests that participation, an indicator in the

behavioural dimension, and identification with the school, an indicator in the affective dimension, have reciprocal causation. When a student feels less connected with the school, Finn argued, participation decreases. This in turn leads to poor student performance, which leads again to less identification with the schooling the student is experiencing, and so on compounding and increasing the level of student disengagement.

The results from this study lend support to aspects of both Finn's frustration-self-esteem and participation-identification models. In particular, this research supports the idea that students' disengagement in the affective dimension is linked to their behavioural and cognitive dimensions, and that all three dimensions are interactive, dynamic and malleable.

The results of this study offer some new insights to disengagement, in terms of the interactive nature of the three dimensions. Some participating students first experienced low perceptions of their school competency, then experienced a lack of willingness to engage with school which resulted in reduced participation in the classroom. Other students first experienced low enjoyment of school as a result of social anxiety; this anxiety was compounded in the classroom, and to cope the students developed poor levels of classroom attendance. One student did not enjoy school for social reasons, and this affective disengagement developed into negative classroom behaviour in the form of poor conduct, which generated more friction between the student and the teacher and so created even less enjoyment of school and more disengagement. The variations in observations such as these support the idea that student disengagement can compound over time and from one dimension to another, and is an individual process which can vary for each student.

The Process of Reengaging

The results from this study also provide insight into how students reengage with education. In Finn's (1989) participation–identification model, he suggests that through participation in school better outcomes can be achieved, which lead on to greater identification with school. The results of this study lend support to Finn's engagement hypothesis, and the following offers some examples and explanations of the process of reengaging students with schooling.

Within the ReDY program, participating students were given strategies to increase their participation in school and strategies to better deal with self-identified problematic aspects of behavioural engagement, attendance and conduct. For example, the program provided practical support in the form of transport to and from school. It provided emotional support to increase students' attendance, as well as a shared intervention based on student-centred choices and consequences. The program had structure and the students negotiated personalised learning and behavioural goals and targets. The results demonstrate that once students' affective engagement increases, their behavioural engagement appears to increase, as does their learning. Over time the students were encouraged to become more self-directed in their learning, and with mentoring they gained a greater understanding that they needed to shape their own thinking and behaviour.

Engagement as a Relationship

This study's results confirm the conceptualisation of engagement as something which is generated in the shared space (McMahon & Portelli, 2004) between students and their education. As Yazzie-Mintz (2007) claimed, in its most fundamental sense engagement is about relationships. The insights into the processes of disengagement

suggested that disengagement compounds in severity and in complexity as time progresses. This compounding quality of disengagement seems to occur, as McMahon and Portelli (2004) explained, with greater friction between the student and the teacher as the escalation of negative interactions between the two. Comments from both classroom teachers, on the students' reports, and from students themselves identified this friction. For example, the students in their interviews spoke about the relationship they had with teachers in the mainstream class in terms of 'hating' the teacher and being 'hated' by the teacher. Yazzie-Mintz (2007) also noted this breakdown in teacher–student relationships, with neither wanting to spend time with the other (absenteeism and suspension), both being destructive (in the class conduct of students, the exclusionary strategies of teachers), and rude (comments made by both teachers and students about each other).

Although not disagreeing with researchers such as Yazzie-Mintz (2012), Zyngier (2008) warned that disengagement is more complex than just a relationship breakdown, and pointed out that students' disengagement is traditionally blamed on the student, while their reengagement is credited to the teachers and the school; and that this is too simple an analysis. In the ReDY program the actions of the staff made a difference, but the program's structure and 'behaviour management' approach was what gave the students opportunities to experience their schooling in a different way. The evidence is that most of the students chose to give school another try, and because of the new approach to learning they experienced, and through a process of gaining confidence, their engagement with teachers and learning increased. Some students in the study, certainly, chose not to engage with the program and reengaged with education in different ways, such as entering a Vocational Education and Training (VET) or a

Technical and Further Education (TAFE) course or moving employment once they turned 17.

Reviewing the Critiques

Several criticisms of reengagement programs have been raised by researchers (De Jong & Griffiths, 2006; Granite & Graham, 2012; Mills & McGregor, 2013; Mills, Renshaw, & Zipin, 2013) and these concerns will be reviewed.

Deficit Approach

The ReDY reengagement program was based on a deficit model. Funding and staffing were based on the notion that some students were not functioning in their classroom setting and their learning was in deficit and at risk. There was also a perception that school was also deficit, and unable to ‘successfully’ cater for these students’ learning or wellbeing needs. Mills and McGregor (2013) maintained that this deficit model is problematic, because it fails to address the issues at school level that caused student disengagement in the first place. The students are also considered at fault for not fitting in (Smyth & McInerney, 2012) and going to an alternative setting reinforces this perception: that is, by attending the ReDY program the students are further stigmatised (Kim & Taylor, 2008), and marginalised from mainstream schooling (Te Riele, 2006).

While it is acknowledged that there are elements of the deficit model associated with ReDY, the consequences were not as negative as this. The opportunity provided by the alternative program was instrumental in improving the students’ engagement with learning and with schooling. The goals that students identified at the beginning of the ReDY program and rated as ‘a major problem in my life’ were the areas that the students identified needed ‘fixing’; by the end of the program students rated these

nearer to ‘no problem in my life’. The ReDY program was designed to assist students by working with their strengths and weaknesses; according to the results, it was successful. When students identified and achieved their goals they improved their affective engagement as well as the particular area of engagement that they were attempting to ‘fix’. Further, their improvements in confidence, and the skills they developed to solve problems, appeared to persist beyond the program. While it would be better if alternative programs were not necessary, the reality is that the student cohort is diverse, and at this time schools are not always flexible enough to accommodate all students in a single setting. Changing the Australian education system so all students are accommodated, is a positive ideal. In the meantime, is it ethical to allow students who are not coping to stay in a hostile setting in the hope that schools will change? Or do school leaders recognise that there is a problem, but also recognise that while there are problems with alternative programs, there may be more problems in having students exit early without offering them an alternative approach?—an argument supported by this research and that of Mitchell (2016).

Contamination Effect

Other criticisms of alternative education programs are somewhat exaggerated or not applicable to this context. There is little or no evidence, for example, that students’ behavioural disengagement is magnified by ‘the contamination effect’ of being placed with other disengaged students and learning more negative behaviours from them, as suggested by Graham et al. (2010); or, as Holdsworth (2004) put it, that if you concentrate the ‘problem students’ you concentrate the problem. The contamination effect argument assumes that a student’s behavioural engagement will decrease in the new setting, but this study demonstrates that the opposite is true: students with

previously poor conduct reported significant improvements in conduct during and after the ReDY program.

The different findings of various studies may reflect the type of students being surveyed. The students selected for ReDY may have had less severe behavioural issues than participants in other alternative programs. It may be that because the ReDY program was located in an annex of the host school, the notion that the students still belonged to the school was reinforced. It may also be that the culture within the program, and the students' new relationship with their teachers, was a critical determining factor. It may be that the delivery of the ReDY educational program removed or ameliorated external influences that promoted students' poor conduct and motivation to learn: that is, the alternative learning environment that focused on a shared intervention approach helped to empower its students, which helped to motivate them to learn and changed their perceptions of themselves.

Lack of Educational Success

Another critique of alternative education programs is that they lack academic rigour (Granite & Graham, 2012), 'dumbing down' curriculum (Smyth et al., 2013) and thus further marginalising the students who attend them. The curriculum in the ReDY alternative program scaled down the standard content and covered fewer subjects than students were expected to study in the host school, and in that sense there was some 'dumbing down'. In addition, there were 'hands on' subjects every afternoon, and a range of social and personal development activities that did not directly relate to the standard high school curriculum. It is a reasonable expectation, then, that the students' academic achievement and cognitive engagement would reduce from participating in a program whose orientation was more to do with personal development. The grades on

students' report cards demonstrate, however, that there was no significant reduction in achievement but there was an improvement in standardised test scores for literacy and numeracy. This might have been because the individual attention and academic and social feedback provided to each student maintained their learning. In addition, the students typically worked on the content they considered necessary, so they were designing a 'remediation program' that worked to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. The activities to do with personal development and social skills encouraged the students to talk with others, to express ideas, to ask questions to clarify their learning, to problem-solve, and to take responsibility. These skills often transferred into their new learning setting and so helped them to maintain their learning and achievement after they left the ReDY program.

The results also demonstrate that the students' perceptions of their competency increased dramatically during and after they returned to their host school. Building academic confidence has been identified as an essential component of reengagement (Borrell, 2011; Cox, 2010). It is interesting that, despite being removed from mainstream curricula and taught a range of other social and emotional skills, students did not appear to be academically disadvantaged on their return to the mainstream.

Reintegration of Students

In her review of the literature on alternative education provision, Thomson (2014) indicated that some full-time alternative education programs that aimed to return students to schools failed because of the unsuccessful reintegration of the students into their mainstream settings. This is not a new concern of alternative education provisions, and Raywid (1995) argued that any positive change that did occur for students in these types of program was often at best, temporary. The lack of successful

reintegration has been linked to three concerns: first, the programs themselves may not equip students with enough academic robustness to perform in a mainstream setting (Granite & Graham, 2012); second, the mainstream schools, may not be able, or willing, to implement the necessary programs and supports for the returning students (Thomson, 2014); and third, a lack of communication between the two may lead to confusion of responsibility and a lack of continuity of care for the student.

The results from this study show continuing strong levels of engagement with students who returned to the mainstream environment. Cognitively, the students' perception of their academic competency remained high. They thought their schoolwork was now easier, and based on report card data their grades demonstrated no decline. Affectively, the students reported finding managing anger and anxiety less of a problem after they returned to their host school; on the whole, they commented on how much more they enjoyed school after the program, compared with before. Behaviourally, the students' attendance rates increased during the program and remained high when they returned to their host school.

There were exceptions to these lasting changes. Two students who completed the ReDY program returned to the host school were, after a time, expelled for violence. They had not shown this violent behaviour in the ReDY setting. The principal of the school in which the ReDY program was located, in her interview, placed the responsibility of the two students' violence with their families, who were going through difficult times. This illustrates the need for a range of services to be provided to students and their families: while alternative educational programs can help, they are not a panacea to what occurs in the home, or in the community. In addition, many students

with significant wellbeing and mental health needs require ongoing support and counselling.

Characteristics of Successful Alternative Programs

Although many researchers have attempted to identify the characteristics of successful alternative education programs (see for example, Glogowski, 2015; Gutherson et al., 2011; Mills & McGregor, 2010; Thomson, 2014) there is still debate on this issue. The claim by Te Riele, Wilson, Wallace, McGinty, and Lewthwaite (2016) is that because success is context determined, it has to be considered as a variable. For Te Riele et al. (2016) success in an alternative program may be measured on a series of criteria. The authors have outlined some of the measures to be considered, as shown in Table 35.

Table 35

Criteria outcomes of alternative education programs

Outcome domain	Evidenced by student
Academic outcomes	Literacy and numeracy test scores Completion of assessment tasks Achievement of qualifications
Engagement in education	Attendance Enjoyment Reduction in disruptive behaviour
Post program pathways	Destinations (employment, further training) Aspirations and skills for future pathways
Personal and social well being	Confidence, resilience Teamwork Positive relationships
Community engagement	Social inclusion Reduced criminal activity

Although in this study not all of the Te Riele et al. (2016) criteria are relevant, reviewing the list and reflecting on the results obtained, the indications are that the Tasmanian alternative program was successful using the Te Riele et al. (2016) criteria.

Advantages and Disadvantages

De Jong and Griffiths (2006) argued that in terms of alternative programs the composition and selection of their participating students, their staffing and their location, as well as their philosophy, purpose, and resourcing, all impact on understanding the success or failure of each. They argued that there is no ‘one model fits all’ or that if a model is successful for many of its participants, one model is unlikely to be successful for all participants. That is, there are both advantages and disadvantages when different service models are compared, and for this reason there is a continuum of alternative education programs (see Table 2 for their continuum). Using the De Jong and Griffiths (2006) continuum of alternative education programs the advantages and disadvantages of the highlighted program in this study can be summarised. Table 5.3 illustrates how the ReDY program can be defined using De Jong and Griffiths (2006) dimensions. Thus, the ReDY alternative program can be defined as: (1) complete withdrawal of students from mainstream, (2) a separate facility located on the campus of the host school, (3) student identification and referral completed by the host school, (4) administered by the host school, highly resourced. Based particularly on the interview data from the teachers and the students, Table 5.3 is a summary of the advantages and disadvantages of the ReDY alternative model under review.

Table 36

Engagement advantages and disadvantages of ReDY program using the De Jong and Griffiths (2006) dimension

De Jong and Griffiths' (2006) Dimension	Program in Study	Advantage	Disadvantage
Relationship to mainstream school	Withdrawal	Allowed students to 'become somebody different' without the previous disengaging environment. Full time withdrawal allowed consistency of approach and expectations.	Students reluctant to attend because separation from peers. Perception of 'school for naughty kids'.
Type of program	Separate on-campus	Students were able to maintain a clear relationship with the host school community. Resources from host school were utilised.	Did not allow a complete break from host school environment. Some host school facilities were unavailable.
Student referral	School	Close relationship with host school allowed for students to be offered the choice to enter at various points in time. Student disengagement was able to be picked up early by the host school.	Students in the community (but not in host school) were not able to access the program. Diversity of students was limited.
Run by	School	Program was not seen as a 'dumping ground' because students were still responsibility of host school. Funding and staffing were stable.	Less autonomy in management.
Resourcing	High	Students were given high contact with staff. Program was able to offer a diverse range of opportunities. Structural barriers to engagement were removed by offering bus, food, stationary etc.	Pressure to demonstrate results through data (value for money). Caused resentment from other parts of the school that missed out on funding as a result.

Limitations and Future Direction of This Research

Research Limitations

There are several limitations that need to be acknowledged with this research, and they should be taken into account when considering the findings and recommendations that have arisen from this study. They also provide direction as to future research in the alternative education domain. In all, there are six issues that need to be considered when interpreting the results, and need to be considered as factors that can reduce the generalisability of the findings.

As explained throughout the study, the role of the researcher as a practitioner-turned-researcher can create research subjectivity in data collection and analysis; how this affects the study needs to be a consideration.

- The study included a very small sample of 46 students and five staff from a single reengagement program in one school in Tasmania. The experiences of the students and staff in the study are context related, and may not be representative of other contexts across Tasmania, Australia or internationally.
- Full sets of data, including pre- and post-host school reports, program reports, survey and interviews, were only available from 14 students in the study. The remaining students were represented by data from the host school and the ReDY program reports (including self-reflections) and for seven of these students, the post program survey. This may have skewed the study towards the 14 complete data sets, and therefore the findings may not be representative of the whole cohort from the program over the three-year period of data collection.
- Students who did not complete the ReDY program were underrepresented in the study. While three of the 14 interviewed students were ‘non-completers’, they still had positive comments about the ReDY program and their time within it. Eight other students enrolled in the study but left it (and the host school) before ten weeks (first reporting

cycle), and these eight voices are absent in this research, although efforts were made to locate the students.

- External factors of disengagement, including family life and wider societal influences, were not fully taken into account. These obviously played a part in the lives of the students involved and would have influenced their reengagement.
- Interviewing more host school teachers might have provided more data and potentially more views for the research.

All these limitations need to be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. It is also acknowledged that alternative programs are often idiosyncratic, dependent on particular local and State education policies, practices, and funding models that can change, and so a true replication of any program can be challenging.

Future Research Directions

The limitations of this research identified above provide opportunities for future researchers to address them. Even so, there is still more research needed on the advantages and disadvantages of alternative education, particularly in the Australian educational context where greater student diversity, educational policies focused on certification and national testing, and changes in educational practices through more e-learning in schools are influencing educational context. The following three suggestions relate to future research in the domain of alternative education:

- There is still uncertainty as to the best ways to identify and support students who are developing poor perceptions of their school competency and have low engagement with school, and how suitable programs can be implemented at the in-class level.
- The pedagogy of reengagement in this study focused on dealing with the affective and then the cognitive dimensions of the participating students, but there needs to be more documentation on this reengagement process. Aligned with this is the need to have a

greater understanding of the range and variety of cognitive, affective and behavioural strategies that are effective with different cohorts of students.

- Home and school connectedness is still an area of research, and the parental voice needs to have greater prominence in alternative educational research.

Although this research followed the participating students for a few years after they completed the alternative program, internationally there is a need for longer-term longitudinal research on alternative programs. For example, the High/Scope Perry Preschool study (Schweinhart et al., 2005) has continued to highlight the benefits for the participants of a preschool intervention some 40 years after the participants completed the program. At the time, the High/Scope Perry Preschool program was considered an alternative program for at-risk students.

Reflections on Policy and Alternative Education

Having conducted this research and reviewed the relevant literature, I am in a position to comment on educational practice and policy as it relates to alternative education. In the Australian context many levels of government and policy directly and indirectly influence the engagement of students in schools. At the Federal level the Council of Australian Governments' agreement of 2009 set a target of 90% of students to attain Year 12 or equivalent standards by 2015. Accordingly, state and territory governments increased compulsory schooling age to 17. The question now is, has the Australian education system adapted or changed to accommodate more students staying on to Year 12? Te Riele (2014) argued that it has not, and suggested that requiring students to stay until Year 12 without providing more meaningful choice in educational offerings has had a major negative impact on 'those students who have traditionally left formal education "early"' (p. 22).

In Australia, each State and Territory is responsible for the provision of education, and for the underpinning policies. Some states, such as Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria,

have state-wide policy approaches that support alternative programs for students disconnected from schooling (Te Riele, 2014). The ReDY program was conducted in the State of Tasmania, where there is limited policy documentation specifically related to students disconnected from schooling; what policy there is tends to focus on when and under what conditions students can be suspended or excluded from school; this is framed in terms of respectful behaviours. However, in my view, suspension and exclusions should be the policy of last resort, after other efforts have been made to accommodate the student in schooling. Certainly counselling and mentoring programs are to be part of the package of services that need to be considered before a student is excluded. The evidence from the students in this study is that high levels of absenteeism occur when students become disconnected from schooling. Rather than seeing high absenteeism as a conduct problem, it needs to be seen as a signal that the student is not coping, that there is something going wrong; and the school counsellor needs to investigate with the student and his/her family what is occurring and what can be done to enhance school attendance. Within Tasmania 'Big Picture' schools have been set up provide an educational alternative to mainstream schools for at-risk high school students, but such initiatives historically suffer from short-term funding policies that are typically reviewed at the end of each election cycle. A realistic evaluation of these initiatives needs to occur so more long-term funding is considered and provided. Where possible, those strategies that have been demonstrated to work in alternative educational programs should be grafted onto mainstream educational practices: certainly a student centred focus that is a characteristic of alternative education programs has application across mainstream education.

The Tasmanian Department of Education is exploring a greater use of what they are calling Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs). These PLPs are developed for students at risk, or those selected for a flexible learning program. Although the criteria for identifying students who qualify for a PLP is still being developed, its use of flexible learning practices is consistent with

the findings of this research. That is, individualised support and learning plans for students at risk can be beneficial and can help to reengage students with learning and schooling.

Teacher Education

Teacher Education faculties and Schools of Education have a responsibility to prepare graduates in a range of skills in relation to the engagement of students with learning. While many Schools of Education in Australia have units that are related to engagement, positive classroom behaviour or behaviour management, it is difficult to see the explicit conceptualisation of engagement as an underpinning factor. At the time of writing, there are very few specialist units (subjects) equipping pre-service teachers with the theory and practice surrounding reengagement or alternative education programs, suggesting the lack of a pathway for those wanting to specialise in this area or with at-risk students in mainstream settings.

The key policy document in teacher education in Australia is that produced by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL, 2014). The AITSL professional standards for teachers include three standards of proficiency: graduate; proficient; highly accomplished; they lead across seven standard areas. Although many of these standards relate to competencies that promote educational engagement in all students, standard areas 4.1 (support student participation) and 4.3 (manage challenging behaviour) are the most relevant for the outcomes of this research. The descriptors under standard 4.1 are consistent with the findings of this study, requiring graduate teachers to ‘identify strategies to support inclusive student participation and engagement in classroom activities’. What is unclear, by the use of the word ‘support’, is whether the operational definition of engagement is conceptualised as a relationship where both parties have responsibility. The approach of standard 4.3 views challenging student behaviour as something to be ‘managed’. That is, the ‘problem’ lies within the student who is showing some level of non-compliance; the notion that the teacher or the learning context has to change is not evident—it is the student who is at fault. The evidence from this research is that if

the teacher's behaviour towards the student changes, and the learning context is more orientated towards the needs of the student, behaviour problems decrease.

Conclusion

Alternative education programs have been used for decades as one method of reengaging students who have disengaged from the mainstream. Considering current educational policy has increased compulsory education age, as well as the recognition that all students in Australia deserve an education, it is likely that there will be a place for these programs for some time.

The diverse and disparate nature of alternative education programs has led to a situation where 'good practice' is typically difficult to determine. Part of the reason for this difficulty is the wide diversity of programs often identified under the general term 'alternative program' for at-risk students. This study has focused on the Reengagement for Disengaged Youth (ReDY) program, whose explicit outcome was the reengagement of students whom the schools had identified as being at risk in their current learning environment. The aim of ReDY was to reconnect the students with learning in an educational environment that provided more support and flexibility in terms of setting negotiated learning goals. The ReDY program was interested in advancing students' development across cognitive, behavioural and affective dimensions, but its core aim was to return the participating students to a mainstream learning setting.

The evaluation of this program demonstrates that typically the students who participated benefitted from the opportunity. Ideally mainstream schools should be able to accommodate all students without the need for withdrawal and alternative programs. Until this occurs there are ethical questions about allowing students who are disconnecting from learning to leave school unprepared and early. It is too simplistic to say alternative programs are good or bad. The programs work or do not work depending on the participants, the staff, the resource model, and the links the program has to mainstream schooling.

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Appendix A: Ethics Approval

<p>Social Science Ethics Officer Private Bag 01 Hobart Tasmania 7001 Australia Tel: (03) 6226 2763 Fax: (03) 6226 7148 Katherine.Shaw@utas.edu.au</p>	
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (TASMANIA) NETWORK	

1 October 2013

Dr Janet Dymont
Faculty of Education
Private Bag 66

Student Researcher: Jeffrey Thomas

Sent via email

Dear Dr Dymont

Re: FULL ETHICS APPLICATION APPROVAL
Ethics Ref: H0013516 - The role of choice in student re-engagement

We are pleased to advise that the Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee approved the above project on 30 September 2013.

This approval constitutes ethical clearance by the Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee. The decision and authority to commence the associated research may be dependent on factors beyond the remit of the ethics review process. For example, your research may need ethics clearance from other organisations or review by your research governance coordinator or Head of Department. It is your responsibility to find out if the approval of other bodies or authorities is required. It is recommended that the proposed research should not commence until you have satisfied these requirements.

Please note that this approval is for four years and is conditional upon receipt of an annual Progress Report. Ethics approval for this project will lapse if a Progress Report is not submitted.

The following conditions apply to this approval. Failure to abide by these conditions may result in suspension or discontinuation of approval.

1. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval, to ensure the project is conducted as approved by the Ethics Committee, and to notify the Committee if any investigators are added to, or cease involvement with, the project.

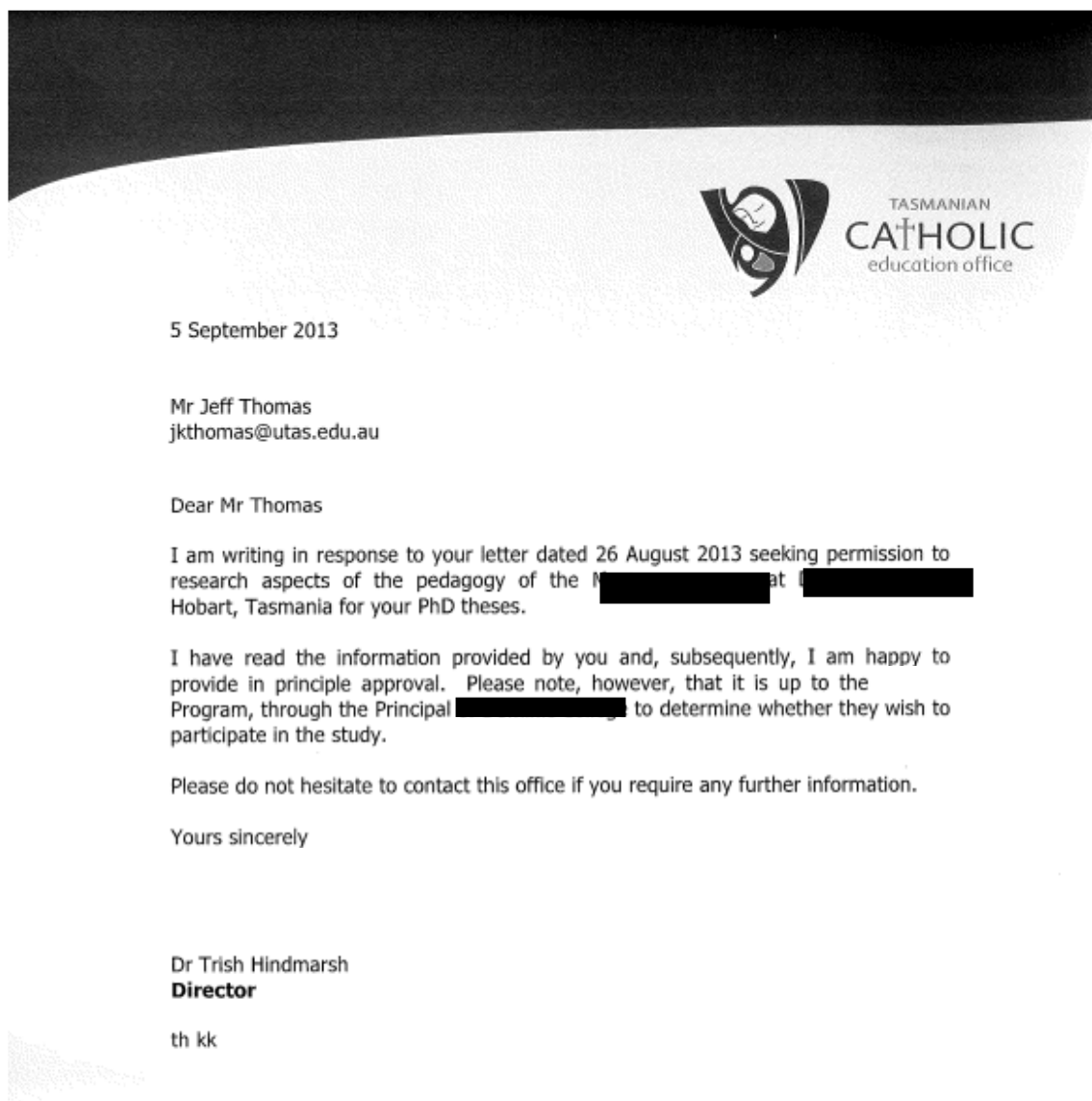
A PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

2. Complaints: If any complaints are received or ethical issues arise during the course of the project, investigators should advise the Executive Officer of the Ethics Committee on 03 6226 7479 or human.ethics@utas.edu.au.
3. Incidents or adverse effects: Investigators should notify the Ethics Committee immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
4. Amendments to Project: Modifications to the project must not proceed until approval is obtained from the Ethics Committee. Please submit an Amendment Form (available on our website) to notify the Ethics Committee of the proposed modifications.
5. Annual Report: Continued approval for this project is dependent on the submission of a Progress Report by the anniversary date of your approval. You will be sent a courtesy reminder closer to this date. Failure to submit a Progress Report will mean that ethics approval for this project will lapse.
6. Final Report: A Final Report and a copy of any published material arising from the project, either in full or abstract, must be provided at the end of the project.

Yours sincerely

Katherine Shaw
Ethics Officer
Tasmania Social Sciences HREC

Appendix B: Support from Catholic Education Office



Appendix C: Support from Host School



12 September 2013

Mr Jeff Thomas
PhD Candidate, UTAS
Private Bag 66
HOBART TAS 7001

Dear Jeff

Thank you for your letter dated 26 August 2013.

I fully support the research you are undertaking and I am happy to undertake responsibility for the aspects you have requested in your letter.

Please liaise with me via my Executive Assistant
(phone _____ or email _____) to arrange
an appointment to discuss your research at _____ further.

Yours sincerely

Principal

Copy:
Dr Janet Dymont
Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education

PO Box _____

P: _____ as.edu.au www. _____

Appendix D: Requests for Support

26th August, 2013

Dr Trish Hindmarsh,

The Director

Tasmanian Catholic Education Office

PO Box 102, North Hobart

TAS 7002

Dear Dr Hindmarsh,

As you are aware, I have resigned from [the sponsor school] to research aspects of the pedagogy of the ReDY Program at [the sponsor school] through the University of Tasmania, and I am writing to you to ask your support to conduct this research within the Catholic Diocese.

The [REDACTED] Program, now in its fourth year, has demonstrated considerable outcomes for its students in improvements in attendance, literacy, numeracy, fitness and goal achievement. Central to its structure is the idea that students choose to attend the [REDACTED] Program, set goals for themselves, and choose to work on them. It is my intention to try and evaluate the role that choice has in meeting the outcomes for the students in the [REDACTED] Program.

Consent from past [REDACTED] students, and their parents if they are underage, as well as from individual staff members will be sought before any information is gathered. All ethical guidelines of the National Statement for the conduct of Human Research are to be adhered to, and official permission from the UTAS Human Research Ethics Committee will be granted before the commencement of any research.

The research is to comprise several components.

Outcome data from the [REDACTED] Program will be sought. This will comprise of pre and post program attendance, literacy and numeracy levels, fitness scores and goal ratings. Access to the Students' self- reflections, within their [REDACTED] Reports will also be asked for after being de-identified by the school principal (names removed, and codes in their place).

1. Questionnaires will be given to all current and past students who wish to participate to determine:
 - a. Whether the student is currently engaged in training or work
 - b. How they would rate their goals currently
 - c. What level of choice they believed they had in entering, and participating in, the [REDACTED] Program
2. Interviews will be conducted with staff currently and previously involved with the [REDACTED] Program to determine what role they think choice plays in the success on the program for students
3. Staff will be asked to rate the students on how much choice they perceive the students had in entering and exiting in the program. This information will be de-identified before being returned.
4. Interviews will be sought with past students to determine what role they think choice plays in the success on the program for them.

All [REDACTED] outcome data, staff choice ratings and student questionnaires will be de-identified by the Principal before it is presented to the researcher. If a student gives individual consent at the interview, the data will be re-identified for that student only. Before any information is disseminated or stored, all data, including the interview transcripts will be de-identified to protect the anonymity of the students and staff involved with the study.

I would hope to be able to provide you, and the Principal of [REDACTED] College, with a full report of the results as soon as it becomes available, and this may help inform the development of re-engagement programs for all students and schools within the Catholic Education system.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the research please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor, Dr Janet Dymment, on the details below. If you are willing to support this research project, please reply in writing at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Jeff Thomas
PhD Candidate,
UTAS
Ph. 0487 457 953
Email:
jkthomas@utas.edu.au

Dr Janet Dymment
Senior Lecturer, Faculty of
Education Ph. 6226 2573
Email:
janet.dymment@utas.edu.au
Private Bag 66, Hobart TAS
7001

26th August, 2013

Ms

The Principal, [REDACTED] College

Dear Ms Gilligan,

As you are aware, I have resigned from [REDACTED] College to research aspects of the pedagogy of the [REDACTED] Program at [REDACTED] College through the University of Tasmania, and I am writing to you to ask your support to conduct this research at [REDACTED] College.

The [REDACTED] Program, now in its fourth year, has demonstrated considerable outcomes for its students in improvements in attendance, literacy, numeracy, fitness and goal achievement. Central to its structure is the idea that students choose to attend the [REDACTED] Program, set goals for themselves, and choose to work on them. It is my intention to try and evaluate the role that choice has in meeting the outcomes for the students in the [REDACTED] Program.

Consent from past and current [REDACTED] students, and their parents if they are under age, as well as from individual staff members will be sought before any new information is gathered. All ethical guidelines of the National Statement for the conduct of Human Research are to be adhered to, and official permission from the UTAS Human Research Ethics Committee will be granted before the commencement of any research.

The research is to comprise several components.

Outcome data from the [REDACTED] Program will be sought from you. This will comprise of de-identified pre and post program attendance, literacy and numeracy levels, fitness scores and goal ratings. Access to the students' self- reflections, within their [REDACTED] reports will also be asked for with names removed, and codes in their place.

1. Questionnaires will be given to all past students who wish to participate to determine:
 - a. Whether the student is currently engaged in training or work
 - b. How they would rate their goals currently
 - c. What level of choice they believed they had in entering, and participating in the [REDACTED] Program
2. Interviews will be conducted with staff involved with the [REDACTED] Program to determine what role they think choice plays in the success on the Program for students
3. Staff will be asked to rate the students on how much choice they perceive the students had in entering and exiting in the program. This information will be de-identified before being returned.
4. Interviews will be sought with past students to:
 - a. Discuss further the role they think choice plays in the success (or otherwise) on the Program for them.
 - b. Grant consent to having their data re-identified to allow cross referencing of Interview transcripts with other data collected in the study.

All [REDACTED] outcome data, staff choice ratings and student questionnaires will be de-identified by you before it is presented to the researcher. If a student gives individual consent at the interview, the data will be re-identified for that student only. Before any

information is disseminated or stored, all data, including the interview transcripts will be de-identified to protect the anonymity of the students and staff involved with the study.

In addition to consent to work with Staff and students under your care I ask that you:

- 1) Facilitate the sending and receiving of questionnaires to past and current
[REDACTED] Students enrolled at [REDACTED] College
- 2) Provide a teacher to explain the study and the questionnaire to past and current
[REDACTED] Students enrolled at [REDACTED] College
- 3) Provide a meeting place (preferably the [REDACTED] Meeting room) for the student interviews (up to 15 x 30 minutes)
- 4) Provide a meeting place for the staff interviews (4 x 30 minutes)
- 5) Provide access to the school counsellor for all students who take part in the interviews at [REDACTED] College
- 6) Assume responsibility for the de-identification of data collected from the school (explained on the attached sheet) and the forwarding of that de-identified data to the researcher

I would provide you, and the Director of The Catholic Education Office a full report of the results as soon as it becomes available, and this may help inform the development of re-engagement programs for all students and schools within the Catholic Education system.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the research please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor, Dr Janet Dymont, on the details below. If you are willing to support the research, please reply in writing at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Jeff Thomas

PhD Candidate, UTAS

Ph. 0487 457 953

Email:

jkthomas@utas.edu.au

Dr Janet Dymont

Senior Lecturer, Faculty of
Education

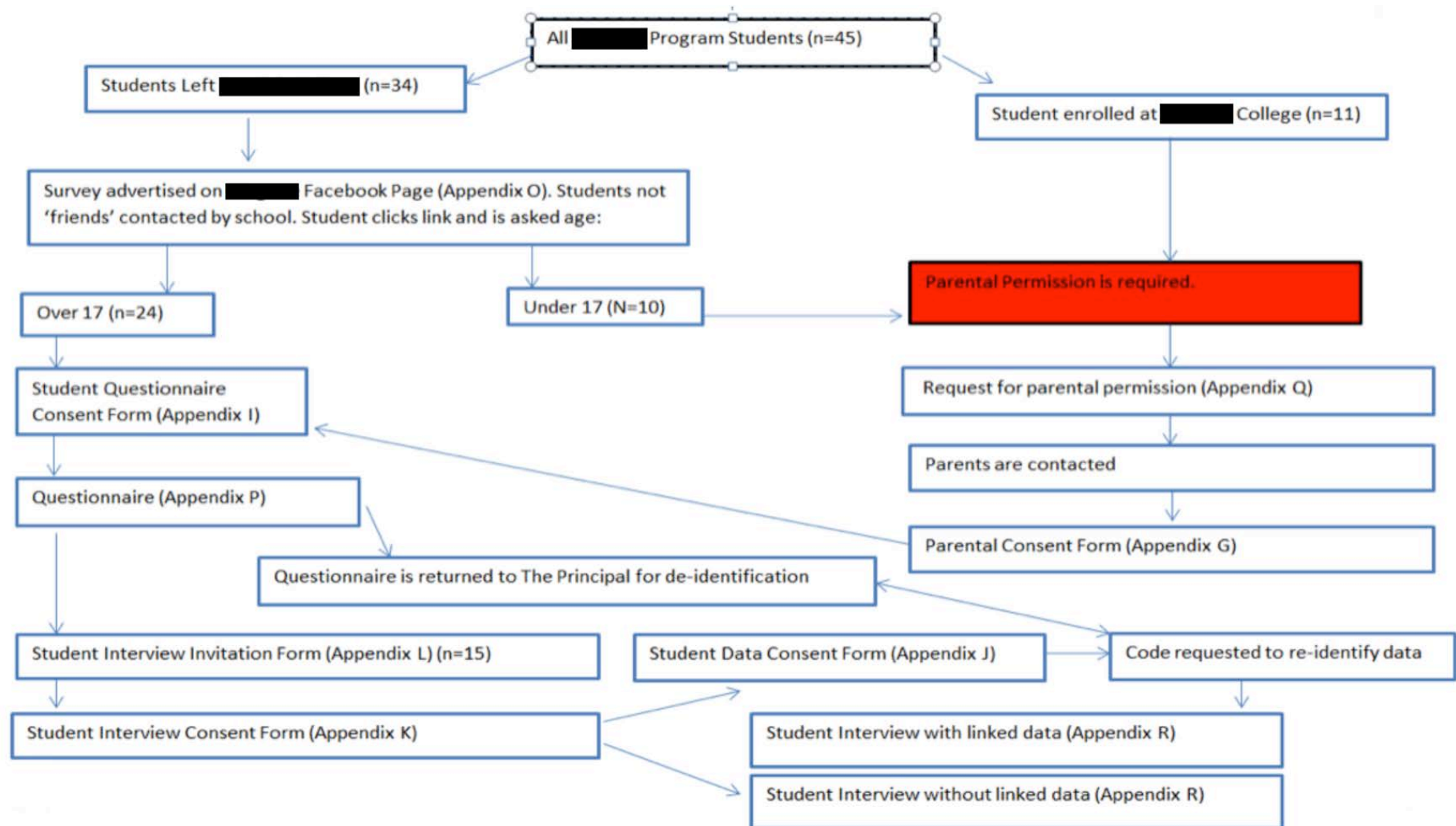
Ph. 6226 2573

Email:

janet.dymont@utas.edu.au

Private Bag 66, Hobart TAS
7001

Appendix E: Consent Flow Chart



Appendix F: Information Sheet (Survey)

The [REDACTED] Program—A Good Choice?

What is the purpose of the Study?

The purpose of the study is to investigate whether the role of a student's choice to participate in the [REDACTED] Program had anything to do with their outcomes from the program.

Why have I been invited to participate in this study?

All students who at one time enrolled in the [REDACTED] Program have been invited to participate in the study. It is just as valuable to the research to involve students who completed the [REDACTED] Program, as to those who didn't.

What does the Study Involve?

If you wish your child to participate, they will be invited to:

- a. Complete a questionnaire about their time before, during and after being in the [REDACTED] Program. The Questionnaire will be made available to your child online and should take about 15 minutes to complete. After you submit the questionnaire, your name will be removed and replaced with a code by Dr Janet Dymont so you will remain anonymous.

Your child may be invited to:

- b. Participate in a 30min interview. This interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. You, and your child will be able to access those transcriptions after the interview upon request.
- c. Give consent to identify your [REDACTED] Data and Questionnaire

You will be asked to provide separate written consent to each of these activities.

You will be free to say no to any or all of them and will only be invited to participate in the ways in which you have already provided consent.

It is important to understand that involvement is voluntary.

Although we would be pleased to have you participate, we respect your right to decline to consent to your participation. If you decide you do not want to be involved at any time, you may do so without providing an explanation. You can ask for any identified [REDACTED] Data, Questionnaire forms or audio recordings of the interview involving you to be removed from the project at any time until the project is finished. You can do this by telling [REDACTED] College, The Principal, or the researchers.

All information will be treated in a confidential manner and your child's name will not be used anywhere in the research. All research data (questionnaires, [REDACTED] data, audio recordings and transcripts) will be stored in locked filing cabinets and password protected files at the Hobart campus of the University of Tasmania.

Are there any possible benefits from participation in the study?

It is hoped that through reflecting upon and discussing their choice to join the [REDACTED] Program, your child will gain insights, which could help them when making complex decisions in the future. There may also be benefits to future students at the [REDACTED] Program and other similar programs as the results from this research may be used to improve future practise.

Are there any possible risks from participation in the study?

There is a chance that your child may feel embarrassment, anger or other negative feelings when reminiscing about their time at [REDACTED] as this was possibly a challenging time for them. During any stage of the study your child can decline further participation without explanation or consequence. You and your child will be able to view and amend interview transcripts and ask that any part of the data or all data that you have contributed be withdrawn from the study at any point. If your child experiences

discomfort at any time they can ask to talk to the school counsellor who will be made available over this time. Should you need to contact her directly you can by:

Email: kgreatbach@[REDACTED].tas.edu.au

Phone: (03)

What happens to the information when the study is over?

Questionnaires, hard copies of interview transcripts and audio files will be stored on the Hobart campus of the University of Tasmania in locked cabinets accessible only by the researchers. Names and other identifying information will be removed from the documents. Computer files will be password protected and stored on a secure server in the Faculty of Education, Hobart Campus. Five years after the publication of the findings, all transcripts and field notes will be shredded; computer and audio files will be deleted. All information will be treated confidentially by the researchers.

Reimbursement

For their time and effort, participants in the interview will be offered a \$20 itunes, or phone charge voucher.

What if I have questions about the study?

If you have any questions relating to the study, feel free to contact me, or my supervisor.

Jeff Thomas

Dr Janet Dymant

PhD Candidate,

UTASSenior Lecturer, Faculty of Education

Ph. 6226 2018

Ph. 6226 2573

Email:

Email:

jkthomas@utas.edu.au

janet.dymant@utas.edu.au

Private Bag 66, Hobart TAS
7001

We would be happy to discuss the research with you.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this study. If you wish to take part in it, please sign the attached consent form and return it to the [REDACTED] Office. This information sheet is for you to keep.

This study has been approved by Tasmanian Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have concerns or complaints about the conduct of the study, you should contact the Executive Officer of the HREC (Tasmania) Network on (03) 6226 7479 or email: human.ethics@utas.edu.au The Executive officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. You will need to quote the HREC project number:

Appendix G: Consent Form (Survey)

The [REDACTED] Program—a Good Choice?

1. I have read and understood the Information Sheet for this study.
2. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.
3. I understand that the study involves completion of a questionnaire (It will take about 15 minutes).
4. I understand that I will need to provide my name so that the questionnaires can be matched, although my name will be removed so that I will not be able to be identified by the researcher.
5. I understand that participation involves no foreseeable risks.
6. I understand that all research data will be securely stored on the University of Tasmania premises for five years from the publication of the study results, and will then be destroyed when no longer required
7. Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
8. I understand that the researcher will maintain confidentiality and that any information I supply to the researcher will be used only for the purposes of the research.
9. I understand that the results of the study will be published so that I cannot be identified as a participant
10. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time until 30th September 2014 without any effect.

Participant's name:

Participant's signature:

Date: _____

Statement by Investigator

☐

I have explained the project and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

If the Investigator has not had an opportunity to talk to participants prior to them participating, the following must be ticked.

☐

The participant has received the Information Sheet where my details have been provided so participants have had the opportunity to contact me prior to consenting to participate in this project.

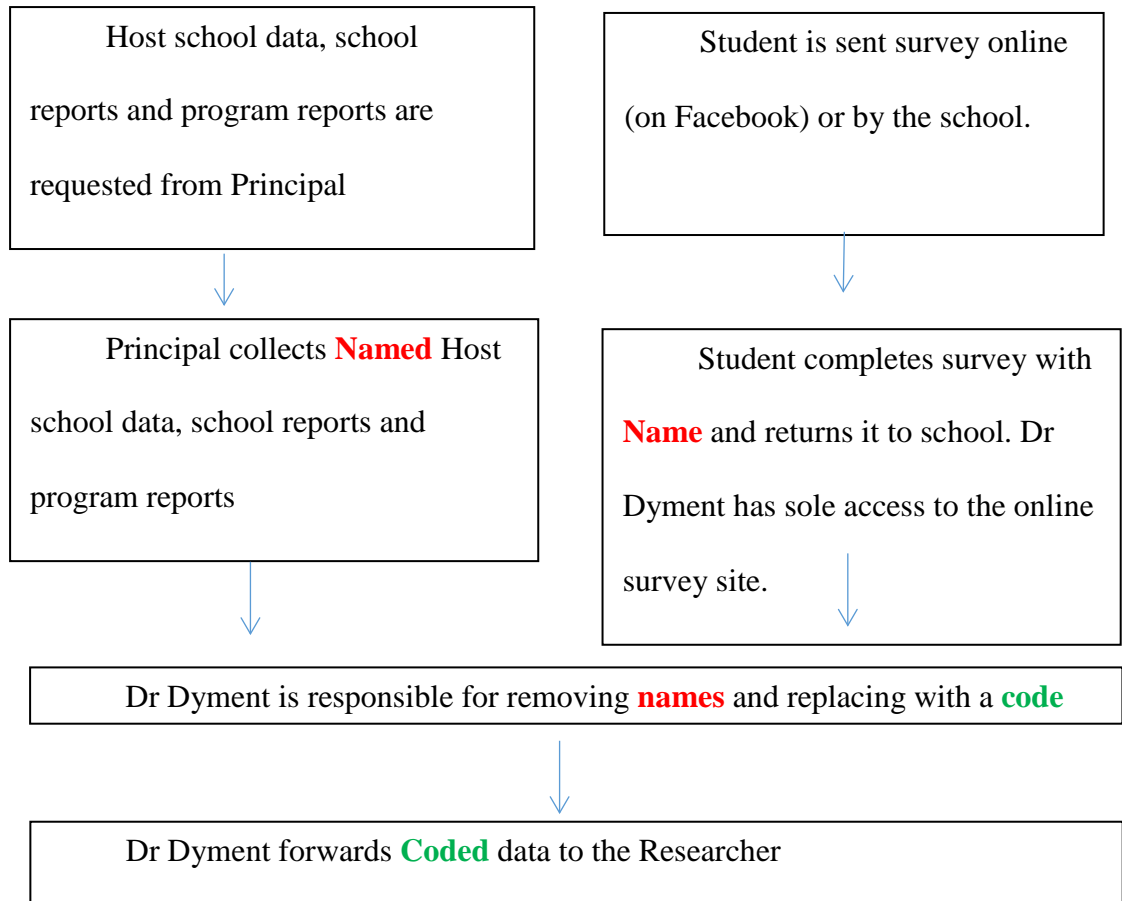
Investigator's name:

Investigator's signature:

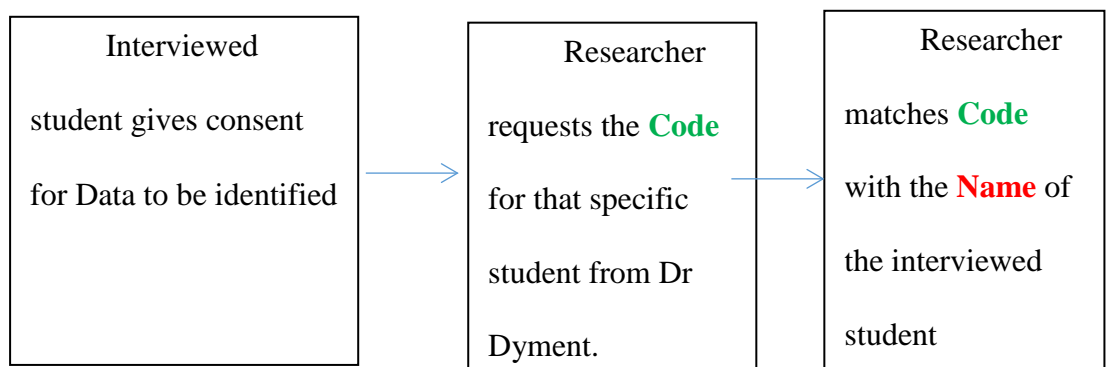
Date: _____

Appendix H: De-identification and Re-identification Process

Part i): The DE-identification process



Part ii) The re-identification process



Appendix I: Consent Form (Interview)

The [REDACTED] Program—a Good Choice?

1. I have read and understood the Information Sheet for this study.
2. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.
3. I understand that this part of the study involves a 30 minute interview. The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. I will be able to access those transcriptions after the interview upon request.
4. I understand that participation involves no foreseeable risks.
5. I understand that all research data will be securely stored on the University of Tasmania premises for five years from the publication of the study results, and will then be destroyed when no longer required
6. Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
7. I understand that the researcher will maintain confidentiality and that any information I supply to the researcher will be used only for the purposes of the research.
8. I understand that the results of the study will be published so that I cannot be identified as a participant
9. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time until 30th March 2015 without any effect.

Parent's name:

Parent's signature: _____ Date:

Participant's name:

Participant's signature: _____ Date:

Statement by Investigator

☐ I have explained the project and the implications of participation in it
to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she
understands the implications of participation.

Investigator's name: Jeff Thomas

Investigator's signature: _____ Date:

Appendix J: Interview Questions

■■■■■ – A good Choice? Past Student interviews

Introduction, purpose of study, consent, recording explanation,

Section 1: (describing)

- Name, age, years since leaving ■■■■■.
- Can you describe what you have been doing since I saw you last?
- Where did you go to Primary school?
- Can you tell me a positive experience from that time?
- Was school a good place for you then?
- How did you family decide to go to ■■■■■ College?
- Were you happy with that decision?
- What did you do with your friends at high school? On the weekends?
- How would you describe yourself as a student at ■■■■■? (before ■■■■■)
- Can you tell me a memory of you and a teacher at school?

What 'emotion' would be the best word to describe you at school?

- Was schoolwork easy for you at high school?
- Did you ever get a detention, suspension at school? Can you explain how that happened?
- Can you tell me about your home life at that time?
- When did you first hear about ■■■■■?
- Can you describe how you ended up going to ■■■■■?

Section 2: (Comparing)

- Was [REDACTED] different to mainstream high school?
- Was schoolwork taught differently at [REDACTED]?
- Did you learn differently?
- Can you describe an experience with a staff member at [REDACTED]?
- What were you like as a student at [REDACTED], compared with before [REDACTED]?
- Was your family life different while you were at [REDACTED]?
- Did you feel like you had more or less control over your life while you were at [REDACTED]?
- Was school a better, or worse place to go to at [REDACTED]?
- Can you describe the time when you left [REDACTED]?
- Where did you go to?
- What was (mainstream schooling) like compared with [REDACTED]?
- Did you feel different in any way?
- What did you enjoy about mainstream school compared with [REDACTED]?
- Do you feel that you were a different student in mainstream school before compared with after [REDACTED]?

Section 3: (Why, How)

- Was [REDACTED] a good place for you to have gone? Why?
- Why do you think [REDACTED] worked (did not work) for you?
- If you were made to go to [REDACTED] (not a choice) how would it have been different?
-

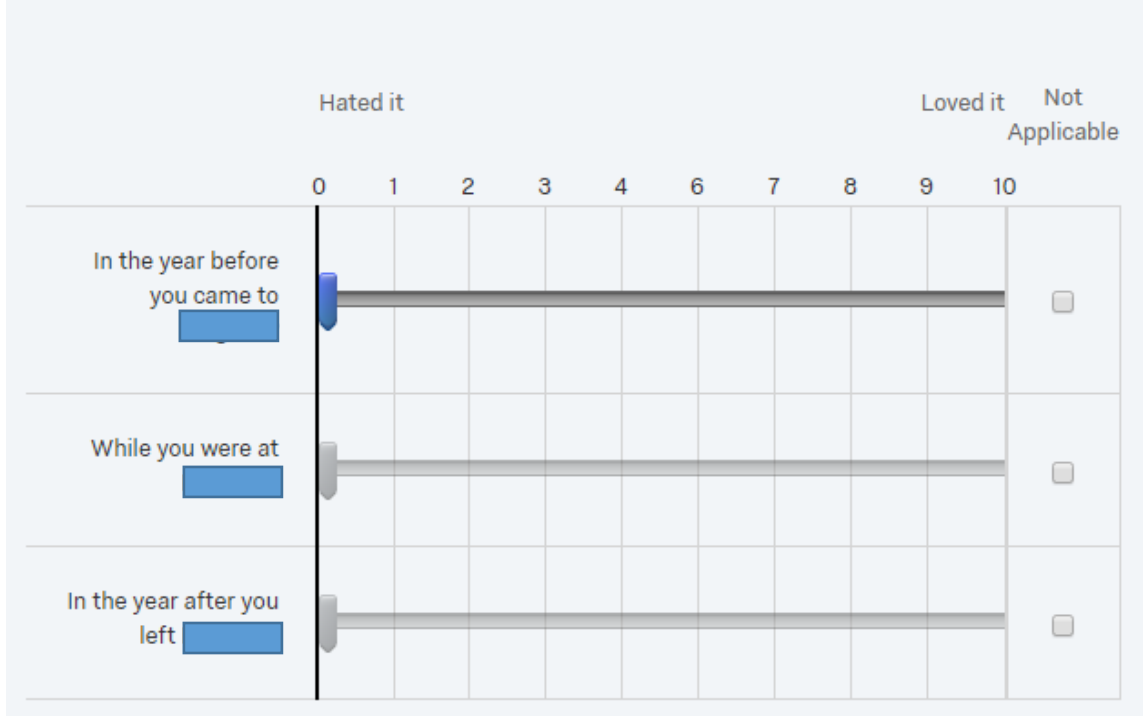
Section 4:

- Would you recommend [REDACTED] to other people?
- Do you think going to [REDACTED] disadvantaged or advantaged you in any way?
- How do you think school would have been different for you if you had not gone to [REDACTED]?
- Do you think that your situation now would have been different?
- Did [REDACTED] help you deal with your emotions?
- Did Going to [REDACTED] give you any strategies at dealing with your home life?
-
- Can you please rate your goals one last time! (0 =major problem in my life, 10= No problem in my life)
 - Goal 1: (rating and comment)
 - Goal 2: (rating and comment)
 - Goal 3: (rating and comment)
 - Goal 4: (rating and comment)

Appendix K: Survey

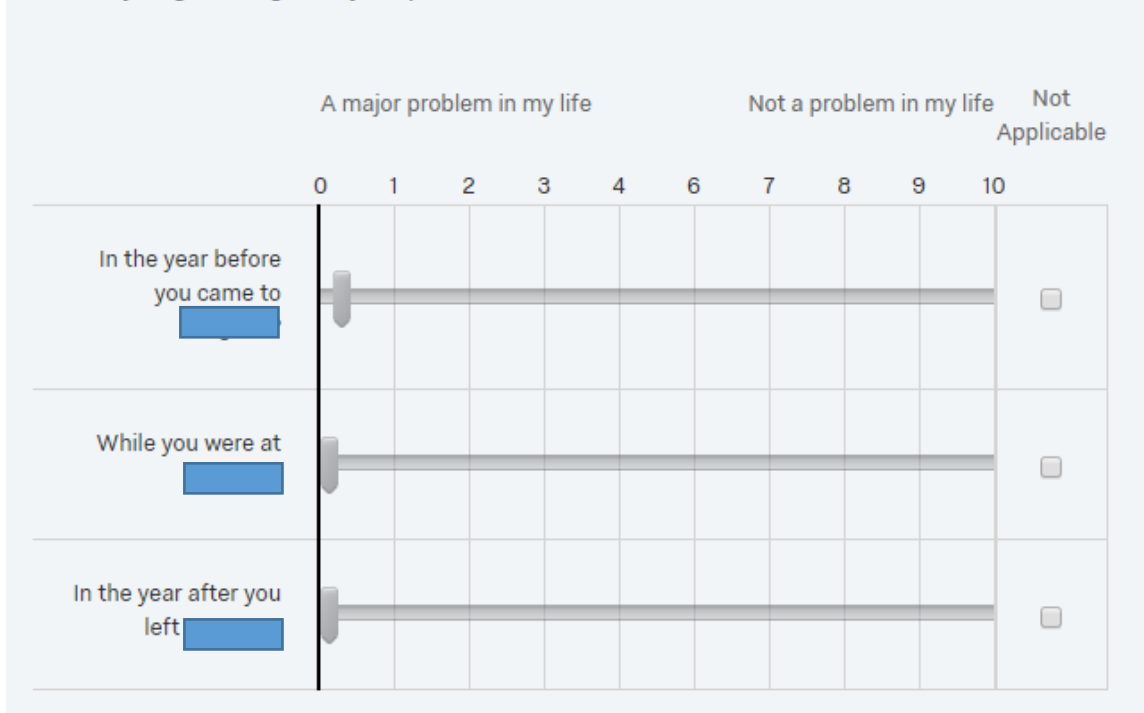
Question 1

Did you enjoy your time at high school?



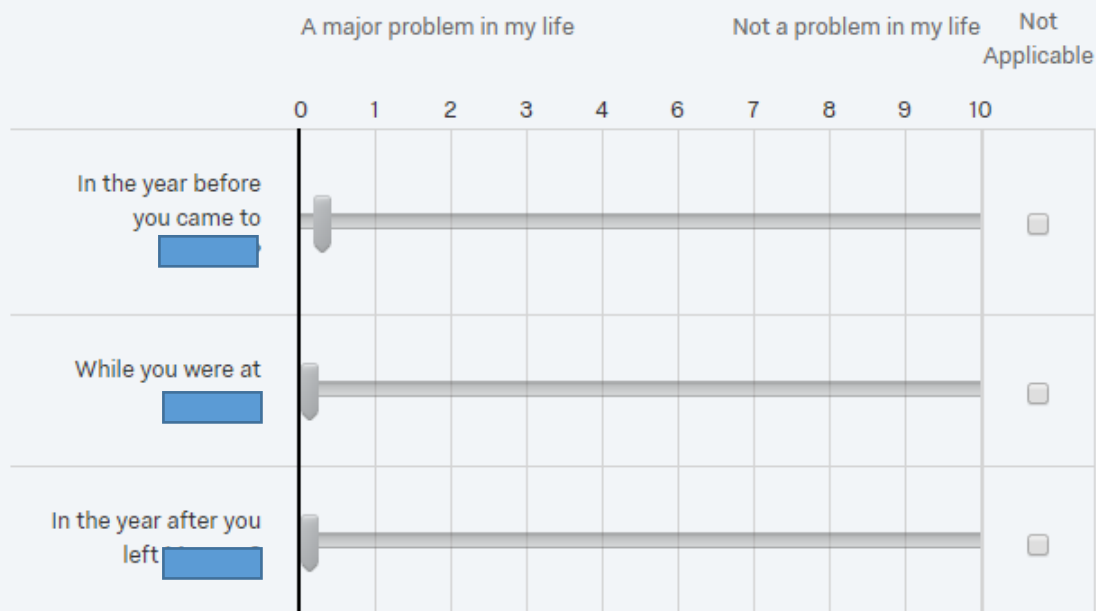
Question 2

How did you get along with your peers?



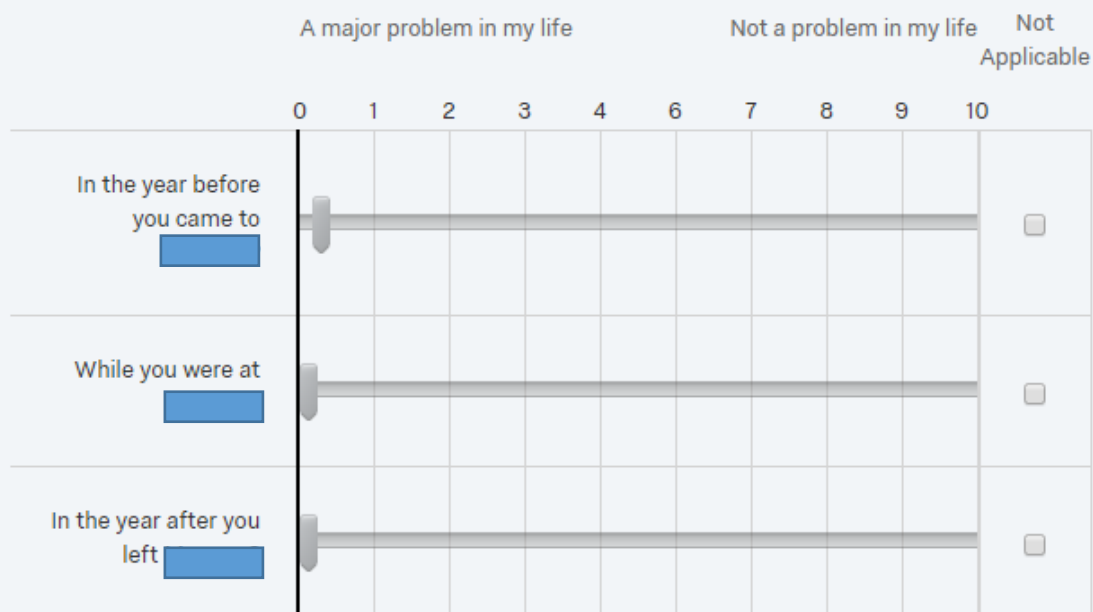
Question 3

Did you find doing school work easy?



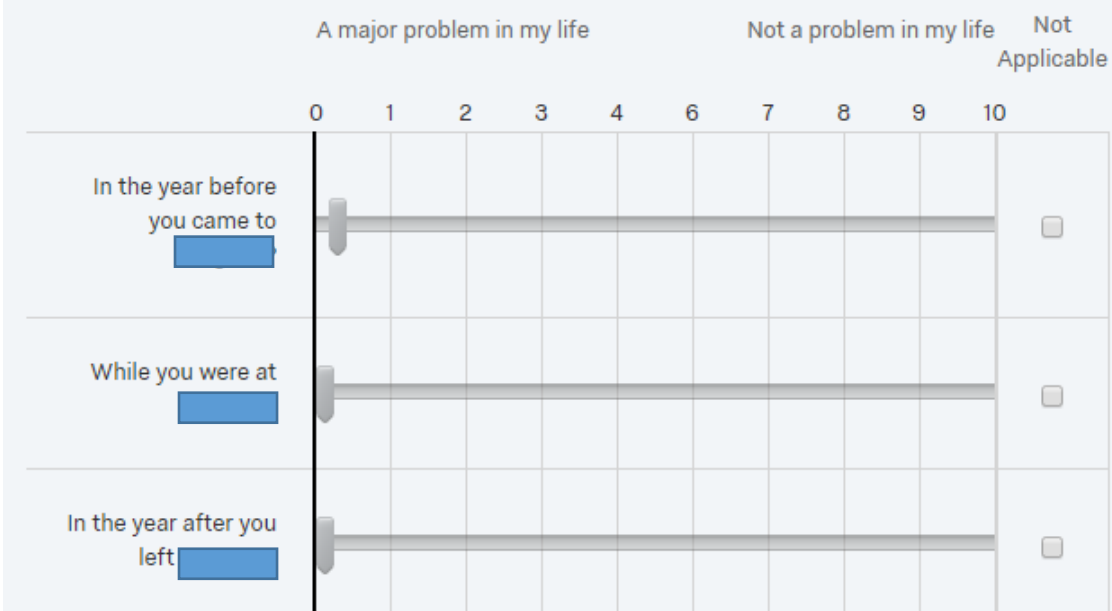
Question 4

How was your family life?



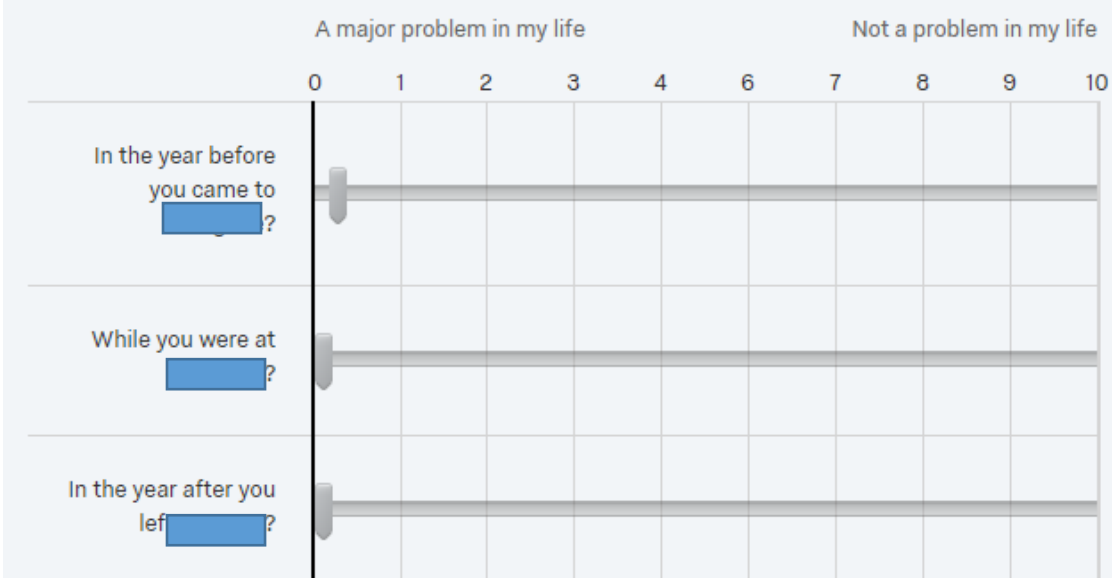
Question 5

How well did you get on with your teachers?



Question 6

Was managing anger a problem for you?



Question 7

Was managing anxiety a problem for you?

A major problem in my life Not a problem in my life Not Applicable

0 1 2 3 4 6 7 8 9 10

In the year before you came to [redacted]?		<input type="checkbox"/>
While you were at [redacted]?		<input type="checkbox"/>
In the year after you left [redacted]		<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 8

Would you say that School was a good place to be?

A major problem in my life Not a problem in my life Not Applicable

0 1 2 3 4 6 7 8 9 10

In the year before you came to [redacted]?		<input type="checkbox"/>
While you were at [redacted]?		<input type="checkbox"/>
In the year after you left [redacted]		<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 9

What best describes what you did in the years after you left [redacted] (Choose as many as you wish)

	School / College	TAFE or Uni	Apprenticeship	Full Time work	Part time work	looking for work	Other	I haven't been gone that long!
In the first few months after [redacted]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The year after you left	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The second year after you left	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The third year after you left	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The fourth year after you left	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 10

How important do you think coming to [redacted] was for your future?

Not important at all Very important

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Question 11

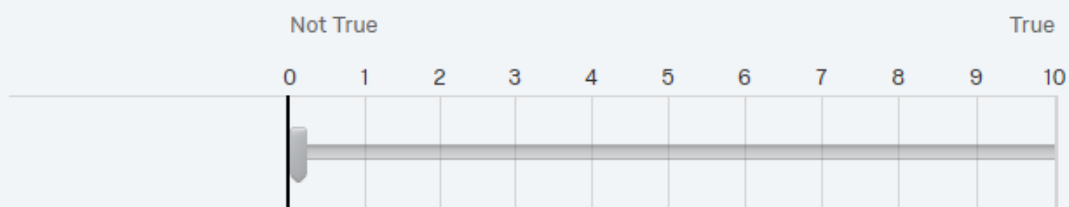
Do you still use any of the strategies given to you while you were at [redacted]?

Not at all All the time

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

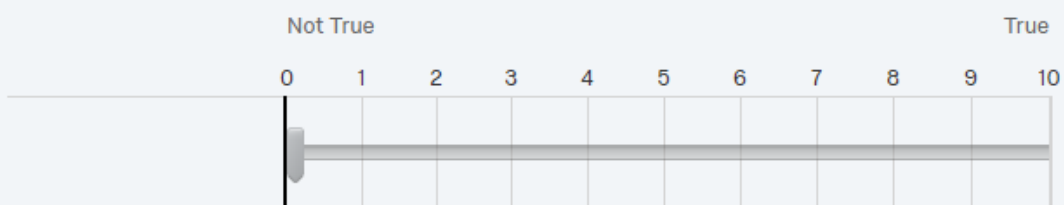
Question 12

If I didn't go to [redacted], I would be doing different things now



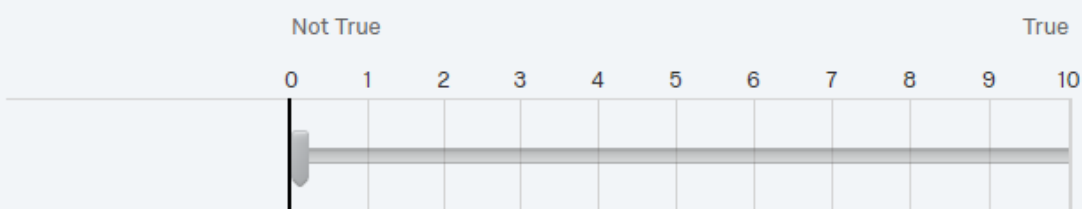
Question 13

Because I went to [redacted] I stayed at school longer

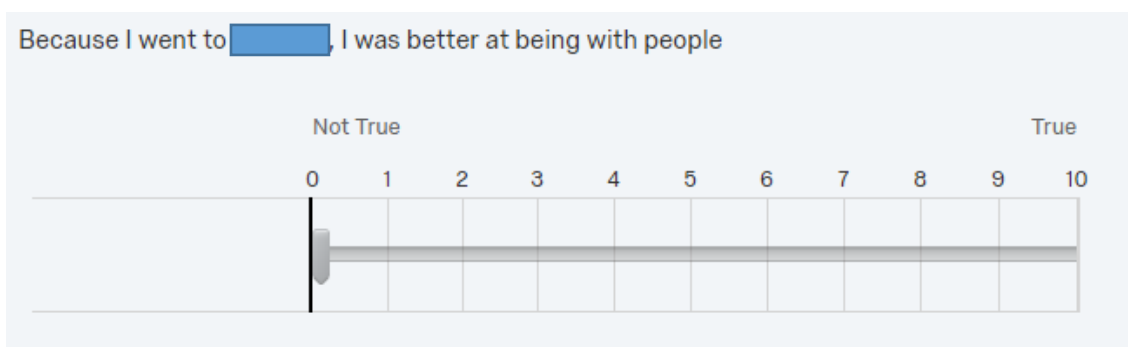


Question 14

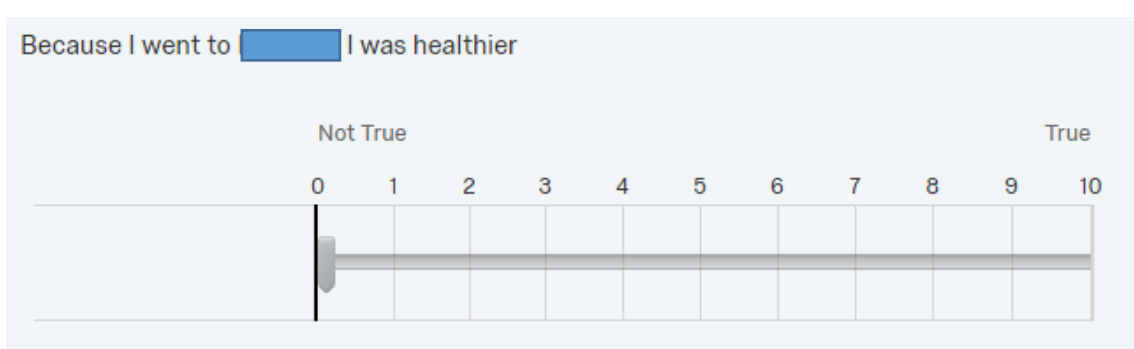
Because I went to [redacted], I was better at school work



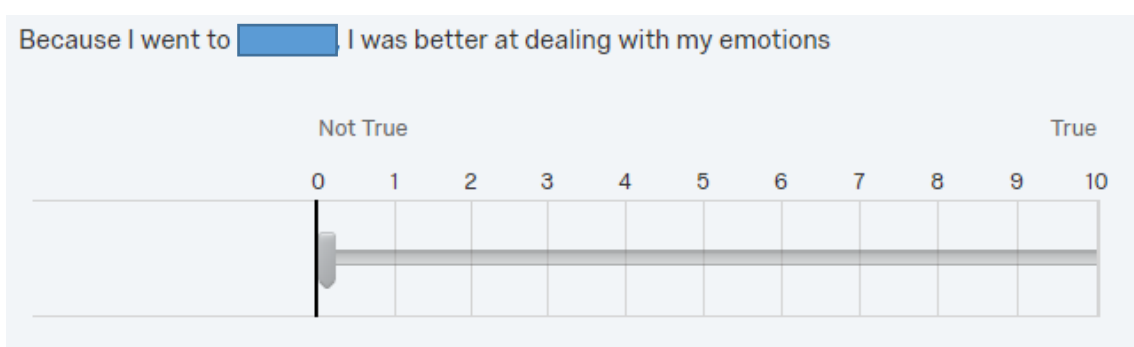
Question 15



Question 16



Question 17



Appendix L: Examples of Program Report

ReDY Program

Mid-placement Report 2010

DF01

Goals	DF01 has identified that she has made improvement in all five of her personal goals. She has identified that four of her goals are no longer a problem.
Attendance:	DF01 has attended for 98% of the time since she came into the program. This compares with 91% last year, an 8% increase in attendance.
Numeracy:	According to the NAPLAN test, DF01 has improved in the number, measurement and algebra areas of Numeracy. In these areas she has improved 20% since beginning the program.
Literacy:	According to the NAPLAN test, DF01 has improved in the reading, spelling, punctuation, grammar and writing areas of Literacy. In these areas she has improved 18% since beginning the program.
Fitness:	DF01 has improved her average run time from 14 minutes 54 seconds to 12 minutes 20 seconds. DF01's personal best time is 9 minutes.
Overall comment:	DF01 has worked extremely hard this term to achieve her goals. We have been very impressed with the level of commitment and enthusiasm she has shown towards her studies and working on her goals. DF01 has shown great

courage and strength recently in learning about both her strengths and weaknesses. We would encourage DF01 to continue this focus as she works towards transition.

Readiness for transition: We would like to discuss DF01's readiness for transition at her next IEP interview.

Principal's comment: DF01 has worked diligently and with mature focus on her goals this term. She is to be commended on the excellent progress she has made in bringing about significant changes in her school and home life.

DF01 has taken wonderful strides in committing to her academic development. Her diligence in completing set tasks and homework has been excellent. I am delighted with her progress. DF01 has conscientiously focused on becoming more consistent in her responses to others and establishing effective ways to ask questions or give feedback.

DF01 has made significant leaps in learning to think and reflect before she speaks or reacts. These changes are now reflective in DF01's overall positive attitude to others and to her own higher levels of self esteem. DF01 is to be admired for her achievement of this change.

DF01's levels of cooperation, ability to collaborate well with others, undertake independent learning and persistence to complete work have all markedly increased. DF01 is to be congratulated on her achievements.

Signed:

The program in Term 2 2010
<p>Maths: In Mathematics this term we have been studying units on probability and number. These foundational units are assisting to build the essential skills needed to further the students' mathematical skills.</p> <p>The students have been learning through direct teaching, computer games—especially for times-tables practice and through mental maths strategies. The students have also started on their individual mathematics programs which have been based on the NAPLAN tests.</p> <p>As well as this, the students have been graphing their run times daily and discussing trends and recording their Science results in tables and graphs.</p>
<p>Science: Our Science study has involved learning about the chemistry of the 'volcano' reaction. This unit has enabled the students to learn about scientific method, scientific drawing, experimental design, scientific write-ups and theoretical chemistry. These skills are essential for continuing Science study in the years to come.</p> <p>The students have experienced practical experiments, computer research, web-based learning, building models and practical experiments as well as direct teaching.</p> <p>Cross curricular Science has involved learning about nutrition in Food Technology.</p>
<p>Arts: In the Arts this term students have worked on a visual art project and participated in drama classes.</p>

In Drama students have explored the issues of power and status through dramatic structures such as tableaux and dynamisation. Through exercises such as the Great Game of Power and Columbian Hypnosis , they have had to consider the complexity of body language, gesture and facial expression, as well as demonstrate a high level of trust support for one another.

The visual art project has been working on a mosaic. Students have designed a mosaic based around what the program means to them. This project and requires to use careful designing, planning, and independent learning skills. The final products will be displayed around the centre.

Food Technology: The two units' studies in food technology this term are international foods and soups. These meals were nutritious, low cost and easy to prepare.

Students were required to write the recipes in their books and to follow them practically in the kitchen and preparation rooms. They have learnt the safe use of knives, ovens and stove tops as well as kitchen hygiene. Students have also learnt to try a variety of different foods and have learnt about cultural influences on food habits.

An ongoing part of our food program is the daily preparation of morning tea and lunch. Each student has been responsible for the meal set-up or clean-up for the group and this responsibility has been taken up enthusiastically.

Daily Physical Education: Every day this term, the students have been involved in some form of daily fitness. The main focus so far has been on base level cardiovascular fitness by completing a 2km run at Tolosa Park. The students have

also been playing soccer or football each day with both skills and competition levels rising steadily throughout the term.

Students have been required to enter their times on a graph generated in Microsoft Excel. These graphs show a trend over the term of improvement, consistency or lack of improvement with running times. Each day the students set a goal to try and bring their graph down.

English: In English this term the students have been doing a movie study and a unit on persuasive writing. These units focus on core English skills such as spelling, vocabulary, punctuation and grammar by studying the movie and writing various persuasive tests such as movie reviews, advertisements, letters, and travel brochures. These skills are essential for progress in English at all levels.

Students have been learning in the classroom setting in many ways, including direct teaching, participation in reading groups, word processing individual pieces of work and working on individual literacy programs. These programs have been developed from the NAP test results.

English has been embedded across the curriculum as students do various comprehension, reading and writing tasks in all other subject areas.

SOSE: In SOSE this term the students have been doing inquiry based learning. The unit has been taught across the curriculum integrated with the World Cup Soccer Unit. Students have been learning about South Africa, including working on geographical information along with historical details. Students have been challenged to consider and discuss social justice issues in relation to apartheid in South Africa. In addition to direct teaching, the students have experienced web based research, online tasks, group work and individual assignments.

Inquiry based learning asks students to pose questions and investigate in order to develop their knowledge and problem solving skills.

Life Skills: Life Skills assists students to develop their resilience and learn to deal with difficult social situations in appropriate ways. This term we have focused on a number of units to assist students to develop conflict resolution skills. Units have focused on developing communication techniques, goal setting, resolving conflict and bullying.

As well as direct teaching students have participated in group work, completed individual assignments and participated in individual case management with staff.

Manual Arts: Mountain Bike rebuilding has been the focus of term two in Manual Arts. Students have stripped back a disused bike to its bare frame. They then cleaned, primed and painted the frames, before rebuilding the bikes again. The aim of the project is to educate students in a practical, low cost skill which they can take away from the program and use in everyday life. Students have worked both individually and as a team on this project and have been guided by direct teaching methods and conducted individual inquiry.

██████ College ██████ Program

Mid Placement report 2010

DF01

On entry to the program, DF01 rated herself a 0 out of 10 for goal A1:

Not reacting to others who annoy me

Current Staff Assessment

Effort



No Effort

Exceptional Effort

Achievement



Major Problem

No Problem

Staff comments:

DF01 has been working diligently at not reacting when others annoy her. Her results have been pleasing, she is able to use strategies such as walk away, take a breath, and have a glass of water. It is important for DF01 to recognise that she needs to seek support if the 'annoying' is actually bullying. DF01 will need to continue to work with staff to ensure that she can identify the difference between bullying and annoying and respond appropriately to both situations. We would encourage DF01 to

recognise when she is becoming angry, frustrated or annoyed, and use strategies to de-escalate. The few situations where DF01 has reacted inappropriately recently have been when she hasn't acted quickly enough, or her strategies haven't worked. DF01 must always take responsibility for this and ensure that every time she feels a situation getting out of control she must seek help.

Student Assessment

Effort



No Effort

Exceptional

Effort

Achievement



Major Problem

No Problem

Student Comments:

I have been thinking about going up to the high school to see all my friends. That is helping me to work hard because I need to reach this goal. I want to go back up there because my friends are up there and so my mum and dad know I have changed and also I know I have changed as well.

I can't go up there unless I achieve that goal because it is a very important goal for me.

I think I am going well because every person that annoys me I walk away. Because that is the right thing to and I also try to ignore the person that is annoying me. I am going pretty well with this goal. I think I can change this goal to a ten.

I will not be affected by the people that annoy me I just walk away and go tell someone that they are annoy me and that I would like to be moved so they don't affect me when I am working.

I would need to try to walk away and go to a teacher or a parent to tell them that this person is annoying me and I would like to move somewhere else or just go out of the room and come back when I cool down. Because a ten wouldn't look like me yelling at that person and reacting to them because that is all the person wants is me yelling at them and getting me into trouble.

██████ College ██████ Program

Mid Placement Report 2010



DF01

On entry to the program, DF01 rated herself a 5 out of 10 for goal A2:

To improve relationship with ██████

Current Staff Assessment

Effort



No Effort

Exceptional Effort

Achievement



Major Problem

No Problem

Staff comments:

DF01 has been working hard on this goal. We are pleased that her attitude towards this goal has changed, DF01 is not able to reflect that she needs to be the bigger person and walk away. It is pleasing to also see that DF01 can see that her behaviour impacts on other people in the house hold. We would encourage DF01 to

continue to reflect on these things and to always remember that she can be a positive role model for [REDACTED] to look up to.

Student self assessment:

Effort



No Effort

Exceptional

Effort

Achievement



Major Problem

No Problem

Student Comments:

My relationship with [REDACTED] is improving I am playing with him more and not fighting as much which is good. My mum sickness has helped me work towards this goal because when me and [REDACTED] fight she gets stressed and yells at us when she shouldn't. So me and [REDACTED] don't fight as much and also because it is one of my goals and if I don't try to achieve it I won't get to go up to the high school and see all my friends. The house would be a lot more peaceful without me and [REDACTED] fighting.

I am going really well with this goal and I just need to keep my mouth shut when [REDACTED] annoys me. I am going really well with goal and before I now it I would have achieve it.

The house would be really peaceful and me and [REDACTED] would spend a lot more time playing then fighting and we well have a very loving brother and sister relationship.

To get to ten I will play with [REDACTED] a bit more and if he starts to annoy me I well just tell my mum or dad or just walk away and come back when he has stopped

being silly. I would just walk away go get on the computer and come back when I have cooled down as well as [REDACTED]

██████ College ██████ Program

Mid Placement report 2010

DF01



On entry to the program, DF01 rated herself a 0 out of 10 for goal A3:

To follow directions

Current Staff Assessment

Effort



No Effort

Exceptional

Effort

Achievement



Major Problem

No Problem

Staff comments:

DF01 has been working exceptionally hard on this goal. DF01 is at a point now where she is able to not only follow staff directions, but is also able to see that it really doesn't matter how important she feels the direction is, she must follow it. DF01 has had one of two incidents recently where she may not have followed directions the first time. These incidents have allowed her to recognise that sometimes she may not actually understand the direction being given. We would encourage DF01 to continue to recognise when she is finding it difficult to understand directions and to ask appropriate questions which will assist her to understand.

Student self assessment:

Effort



No Effort

Exceptional

Effort

Achievement



Major Problem

No Problem

Student comments:

I think I have done well at following directions. I think helping me achieve this goal is me wanting to change and I want to follow directions because I want people to respect me a lot more than they do now.

I think I am doing well with this goal because I am doing more work following directions and I am also not back chatting when I am told to do something.

It will be me doing something straight away and no back chatting at all. I think I have achieved this goal a lot more now I realised that it is better for me.

If it was a ten it would look like me doing everything and doing the work and doing the cleaning at home. I have am following more directions at home and I am doing a lot more stuff and that is what it should look like.

██████ College ██████ Program



Mid Placement report 2010

DF01

On entry to the program, DF01 rated herself a 5 out of 10 for goal A4:

To be responsible for myself

Current Staff Assessment

Effort



No Effort

Exceptional

Effort

Achievement



Major Problem

No Problem

Staff comments:

DF01 has made wonderful progress with this goal. DF01 has been very diligent in ensuring her work is completed, she asks questions if she doesn't understand and she makes best use of her time. DF01 has been doing extra homework, paying special attention to her work and this is very pleasing. We occasionally need to remind DF01 to focus on herself when she feels the need to make comment about other students and we would encourage her to continue to think about what the purpose of her comments are before she actually says them.

Student self assessment:

Effort



No Effort

Exceptional Effort

Achievement



Major Problem

No Problem

Student comments:

I have learnt that when you are responsible for yourself people trust you more. So it is trust that helping me achieves this goal because not many people trust me because and I need trust to have friends and I need trust to get a job and everything like that.

I think I am going really well with this goal but I think I need to just be responsible for myself and not worry about other people's things. I will not be worrying about other people apart from myself and that I will have a lot more trust

and that I will just say it was me even if it wasn't because that is being responsible for yourself and not worrying about anyone else.

I will just need to worry about myself and ask questions and not sit back and say I know what I am doing. I won't be behind in the work and I would learn a lot more and I would be in front of the people that don't listen and I won't be dumb like that I would be smart and I would have a great job and have a good life and I house to live in.

██████ College ██████ Program



Mid Placement report 2010

DF01

On entry to the program, DF01 rated herself a 0 out of 10 for goal A4:

To improve school marks

Current Staff Assessment

Effort



No Effort

Exceptional Effort

Achievement



Major Problem

No Problem

Staff comments:

DF01 has been working contentiously at this goal. DF01 has been doing all her homework, asking questions, completing work to a high standard and spending extra time to get assignments done. We appreciate all the effort DF01 has been putting in

and recognise this as a very positive change. DF01 now asks questions in order to assist her understanding rather than making unnecessary statements about the task at hand.

DF01 has made progress in the spelling, punctuation, grammar and writing areas of Literacy. DF01 still needs to work on being clear with what she is writing, proof reading for mistakes, and ensuring she clearly understands what she is writing.

In Numeracy, DF01 has been putting in considerable effort to increase her skills and understanding. Her algebra skills have increased significantly and she has been able to complete difficult tasks solving equations and substituting pronumerals. According to the NAPLAN test DF01 showed a strong increase from March to May, but an overall decrease in the August test. This could indicate that DF01's ability to remember mathematical processes needs work and this can be a focus for the remainder of the year.

Student self assessment:

Effort



No Effort

Exceptional Effort

Achievement



Major Problem

No Problem

Student comments:

I think I have improved my school marks I am getting better in reading maths and nearly every subject.

I want to improve my school work so I am not dumb and so I get a good job and not working at KFC all my life.

I am going to ask for help and pay attention in class and not talk to people around me or I will not learn and if I have trouble with that I will ask the teacher if I can move up the back or by myself and not be distracted by people around me.

I will be smarter then I was before and I also well be paying a lot more attention to the teacher and asking Questions if I didn't get the work or don't understand it. I would also not be talking to others and just getting on with my work. I need to go up to the teacher and ask a Question or put my hand up and ask not call out across the room. I would have just got on with my work and had my eyes glued to my book and when the teacher talks give full eye contact so they know I am listing and I want to learn and get a good education.

Appendix M: Examples of Host School Reports

██████████ COLLEGE SECONDARY CAMPUS

MID YEAR REPORT 2011

Student: ██████████

Class: ██████████

Year: 8

Pastoral Teacher: ████████████████████

Our school reports on your child's progress with a written report and parent interview twice a year.

Assessment of Achievement

A =Signifies that the student is consistently achieving well above the expected Grade Level

i.e. Demonstrates extensive knowledge, skills and understanding and readily applies independently in new situations.

B=Signifies that the student is consistently achieving above the expected Grade Level

i.e. Demonstrates thorough knowledge, skills and understanding in most situations all of the time.

C=Signifies that the student is consistently achieving at the expected Grade Level

i.e. Demonstrates sound knowledge, skills and understanding most of the time.

D=Signifies that the student is often not achieving at the expected Grade Level

i.e. Demonstrates some knowledge, skills and understanding some of the time.

E=Signifies that the student is consistently not achieving at the expected Grade Level

i.e. Demonstrates few areas of expected knowledge, skills and understanding.

Z=Signifies that the student has presented insufficient work for assessment.

NYA =Signifies that the criterion is yet to be covered.

Modified Reports will be provided for students on modified programs.

<div style="background-color: black; width: 80px; height: 15px; display: inline-block; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> COLLEGE SECONDARY CAMPUS MID YEAR REPORT 2011 <div style="background-color: black; width: 120px; height: 15px; display: inline-block; margin-top: 5px;"></div>													
Report for: Religious Studies	YEAR 8/ XXXX												
4													
<p>Assessment of this syllabus has been based upon the degree to which the student can:Rating A-Z</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">1. use key terms and concepts appropriately;</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: right;">C</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religious ideas and</td> <td style="text-align: right;">C</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. use evidence to support a point of view;</td> <td style="text-align: right;">C</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. demonstrate an ability to apply religious concepts to different</td> <td style="text-align: right;">C</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5. analyse and evaluate issues and information;</td> <td style="text-align: right;">C</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6. accept responsibility for own work and learning.</td> <td style="text-align: right;">B</td> </tr> </table>		1. use key terms and concepts appropriately;	C	2. demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religious ideas and	C	3. use evidence to support a point of view;	C	4. demonstrate an ability to apply religious concepts to different	C	5. analyse and evaluate issues and information;	C	6. accept responsibility for own work and learning.	B
1. use key terms and concepts appropriately;	C												
2. demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religious ideas and	C												
3. use evidence to support a point of view;	C												
4. demonstrate an ability to apply religious concepts to different	C												
5. analyse and evaluate issues and information;	C												
6. accept responsibility for own work and learning.	B												
Mid Year Assessment	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 30px; display: inline-block; line-height: 30px;">C</div>												
Is a parent teacher interview required for this subject? O(O=Optional : R=Requested)													

Teacher's comments:

██████ has settled quickly into this class. He has a friendly nature and is keen to get on with his work. If he can maintain this attitude and avoid being involved in any disruption he should progress well.

Subject Teacher: ██████████

<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="background-color: black; width: 100px; height: 1.2em; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div>COLLEGE SECONDARY CAMPUS</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div>MID YEAR REPORT 2011</div> <div style="background-color: black; width: 100px; height: 1.2em; margin-top: 5px;"></div> </div>	
<p>Report for: English</p>	<p>YEAR 8/ XXXX</p>
<p>4</p>	
<p>Assessment of this syllabus has been based upon the degree to which the student can:Rating A-Z</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. speak and listen for personal and social purposes; 2. read and view a variety of texts to access meaning and explore 3. appreciate and analyse the structure and features of written and 4. write with appropriate accuracy and clarity of expression; 5. create and craft a range of texts for a variety of purposes and 6. accept responsibility for own work and learning. 	
<p>Mid Year Assessment</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 30px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; margin: 0 auto;"> D </div>
<p>Is a parent teacher interview required for this subject?(O=Optional : R=Requested)</p>	

Teacher's comments:

██████ has settled into this small, supported English class very well. He listens and participates effectively in general class discussions and will ask for assistance when necessary. ██████ is working towards developing skills across the range of criteria. He is encouraged to read widely in order to enhance his comprehension skills. It is also important that ██████ consistently proof-reads his written pieces and submits them promptly by the due date.

Subject Teacher: ████████████████████

<div style="background-color: black; width: 80px; height: 15px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> COLLEGE SECONDARY CAMPUS MID YEAR REPORT 2011 <div style="background-color: black; width: 120px; height: 15px;"></div>	
<p>Report for: Mathematics</p> <p>Assessment of this syllabus has been based upon the degree to which the student can:Rating A-Z</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. solve problems, utilize technology where appropriate and use 2. manipulate numbers, as whole or part quantities; 3. employ and manipulate algebraic forms and describe their 4. represent and manipulate spatial concepts; 5. calculate and convert units of measure; 6. collect, classify, represent and describe data and chance events. <p>Mid Year Assessment</p>	<p>YEAR 8/</p> <p>XXXX 4</p> <p>NYA</p> <p>NYA</p> <p>NYA</p> <p>NYA</p> <p>NYA</p> <p>NYA</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Insufficient</div> <p>Is a parent teacher interview required for this subject? O(O=Optional : R=Requested)</p>

Teacher's comments:

██████ was placed in this small Maths class in order to give him the opportunity to receive more assistance to improve his basic Maths skills. ██████ has settled well and is taking full advantage of this situation. He applies himself to all set tasks promptly, asks for assistance, where necessary, and completes his work efficiently. This, coupled with adequate test preparation, should see ██████ results improve.

Subject Teacher: ████████████████████

<div style="background-color: black; width: 80px; height: 15px; display: inline-block; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> COLLEGE SECONDARY CAMPUS	
MID YEAR REPORT 2011 <div style="background-color: black; width: 120px; height: 15px; display: inline-block; margin-top: 10px;"></div>	
Report for: Science	YEAR 8/ XXXX
4	
Assessment of this syllabus has been based upon the degree to which the student can: Rating A-Z	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. use equipment safely and correctly; 2. present, understand and interpret results of experiments and use 3. collect and communicate information using a variety of means; 4. understand scientific ideas and the impact of science on society; 5. demonstrate ability to carry out research; 6. accept responsibility for own work and learning. 	
Mid Year Assessment	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">Insufficient</div>
Is a parent teacher interview required for this subject? O(O=Optional : R=Requested)	

Teacher's comments:

██████ has not been in this class to complete the assessment tasks. The interest he shows in Science, particularly in practical work, is commendable, but he needs to focus in class, complete homework regularly and ask for help when he finds the work difficult. ██████ also needs to ensure he completes his practical reports so that he learns from the investigations.

Subject Teacher: [REDACTED]

<div style="background-color: black; width: 80px; height: 15px; display: inline-block; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> COLLEGE SECONDARY CAMPUS	
MID YEAR REPORT 2011 <div style="background-color: black; width: 120px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	
Report for: Society and Environment	YEAR 8/ XXXX
4	
Assessment of this syllabus has been based upon the degree to which the student can: Rating A-Z	
1. recall and understand facts and information;	C
2. show awareness of current events in Australia and overseas;	C
3. find and use information from a variety of sources;	D
4. communicate ideas and information;	C
5. understand and evaluate the implications of events, issues and	D
6. accept responsibility for own work and learning.	C
Mid Year Assessment	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 30px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> C </div>
Is a parent teacher interview required for this subject? O(O=Optional : R=Requested)	

Teacher's comments:

██████ has made satisfactory progress with the development of his skills in SOSE this term. He displays interest in the topics being studied and is an occasional participant in the work of the lessons. Sometimes, he is distracted from the task at hand. This affects the quality of his responses but, when he settles to the work, he can achieve satisfactory standards in his class and assessment work. If ██████ ensures his focus and effort are consistent, these results will be improved.

Subject Teacher: ████████████████████

<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 20%; background-color: black; height: 1.2em;"></div> <div>COLLEGE SECONDARY CAMPUS</div> </div> <p style="margin-top: 10px;">MID YEAR REPORT 2011</p> <div style="background-color: black; height: 1.2em; width: 100px; margin-top: 10px;"></div>													
<p>Report for: Health and Physical Education</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">4</p> <p>Assessment of this syllabus has been based upon the degree to which the student can: Rating A-Z</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">1. understand how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and can apply their</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: right;">NYA</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. understand and can promote personal identity and positive</td> <td style="text-align: right;">NYA</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. understand lifestyle factors that influence participation in physical</td> <td style="text-align: right;">NYA</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. acquire and use movement skills and concepts to enhance</td> <td style="text-align: right;">A</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5. work at the National Benchmarks for fitness in Australia;</td> <td style="text-align: right;">NYA</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6. take responsibility for learning.</td> <td style="text-align: right;">C</td> </tr> </table> <p style="margin-top: 10px;">Mid Year Assessment</p>	1. understand how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and can apply their	NYA	2. understand and can promote personal identity and positive	NYA	3. understand lifestyle factors that influence participation in physical	NYA	4. acquire and use movement skills and concepts to enhance	A	5. work at the National Benchmarks for fitness in Australia;	NYA	6. take responsibility for learning.	C	<p>YEAR 8/ XXXX</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 40px; margin: 10px auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; font-weight: bold;">B</div>
1. understand how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and can apply their	NYA												
2. understand and can promote personal identity and positive	NYA												
3. understand lifestyle factors that influence participation in physical	NYA												
4. acquire and use movement skills and concepts to enhance	A												
5. work at the National Benchmarks for fitness in Australia;	NYA												
6. take responsibility for learning.	C												
<p>Is a parent teacher interview required for this subject? O(O=Optional : R=Requested)</p>													
<p>Teacher's comments:</p> <p style="margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="background-color: black; width: 60px; height: 1.2em; display: inline-block;"></div> is a good contributor in Physical Education classes. While his fitness needs improvement, his skill level is excellent, and he participates in all activities. Occasionally <div style="background-color: black; width: 60px; height: 1.2em; display: inline-block;"></div> could improve his conduct. In Health, <div style="background-color: black; width: 60px; height: 1.2em; display: inline-block;"></div> is happy to contribute to class discussions, however he needs to ensure his workbook is of satisfactory standard. </p> <p style="margin-top: 10px;">Subject Teacher: <div style="background-color: black; width: 150px; height: 1.2em; display: inline-block;"></div></p>													

<div style="background-color: black; width: 80px; height: 15px; display: inline-block; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> COLLEGE SECONDARY CAMPUS	
MID YEAR REPORT 2011 <div style="background-color: black; width: 120px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	
Report for: Art, Craft, & Design	YEAR 8/ XXXX
4	
Assessment of this syllabus has been based upon the degree to which the student can: Rating A-Z	
1. develop technical skills;	C
2. develop visual perception;	C
3. create artworks with attention to design and composition;	C
4. show individuality and creativity in artworks;	C
5. refine work to achieve optimum results;	C
6. accept responsibility for own work and learning.	C
Mid Year Assessment	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 30px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> C </div>
Is a parent teacher interview required for this subject? O(O=Optional : R=Requested)	

Teacher's comments:

██████ is a friendly member of the class who appears to enjoy most aspects of the work. Since joining the class he appears to demonstrate a good understanding of the skills and concepts taught so far in his drawing. I suggest ██████ stays focused in class to complete the work set rather than socialise. I believe that if ██████ can continue finding creative solutions and sustain his interest in art, he will achieve a good outcome in this subject at the end of the year.

Subject Teacher: ██████

<div style="background-color: black; width: 80px; height: 15px; display: inline-block; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> COLLEGE SECONDARY CAMPUS	
MID YEAR REPORT 2011 <div style="background-color: black; width: 120px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	
Report for: Information Technology	YEAR 8/ XXXX
4	
Assessment of this syllabus has been based upon the degree to which the student can: Rating A-Z	
1. demonstrate an understanding of information systems and	NYA
2. create effective information products by applying design	NYA
3. demonstrate an understanding of social and ethical issues	NYA
4. communicate ideas and information;	NYA
5. use appropriate strategies and tools to locate, access and	NYA
6. analyse problems, develop strategies and critically evaluate own work or other information products;	NYA
Mid Year Assessment	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">Insufficient</div>
Is a parent teacher interview required for this subject? O(O=Optional : R=Requested)	

Teacher's comments:

██████ is a friendly and co-operative student who works diligently in class. He is enthusiastic in his approach to learning new software and is not afraid to seek help if he is unsure. I encourage ██████ to ensure he fulfils all requirements of the task and focus on attention to detail when designing information products.

Subject Teacher: [REDACTED]

<div style="background-color: black; width: 80px; height: 15px; margin-bottom: 10px;"></div> COLLEGE SECONDARY CAMPUS MID YEAR REPORT 2011 <div style="background-color: black; width: 120px; height: 15px;"></div>													
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> Report for: Drama YEAR 8/ XXXX </div> <div style="text-align: right; margin-top: 10px;">4</div> <p style="margin-top: 20px;">Assessment of this syllabus has been based upon the degree to which the student can: Rating A-Z</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">1. uses and develops dramatic skills and techniques;</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: right;">NYA</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. communicates ideas and expresses a personal voice;</td> <td style="text-align: right;">NYA</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. creates and sustains a variety of roles in performance ;</td> <td style="text-align: right;">NYA</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. reflects on and identifies processes for further development in own</td> <td style="text-align: right;">NYA</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5. observes and critically appraises drama works;</td> <td style="text-align: right;">NYA</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6. works effectively as an individual and co-operatively with others</td> <td style="text-align: right;">NYA</td> </tr> </table> <p style="margin-top: 10px;">in drama activities.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-top: 20px;"> Mid Year Assessment <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 30px;"></div> </div> <p style="margin-top: 20px;">Is a parent teacher interview required for this subject? O(O=Optional : R=Requested)</p>	1. uses and develops dramatic skills and techniques;	NYA	2. communicates ideas and expresses a personal voice;	NYA	3. creates and sustains a variety of roles in performance ;	NYA	4. reflects on and identifies processes for further development in own	NYA	5. observes and critically appraises drama works;	NYA	6. works effectively as an individual and co-operatively with others	NYA	
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Teacher's comments:

██████ is working to develop his skills across a range of criteria in this course. While he has participated effectively in all of the practical tasks and performance pieces, his written work would benefit from greater length and detail. ██████ has worked in a small group and he is encouraged to consistently make productive use of his class time in order to complete tasks to the best of his ability.

Subject Teacher: ████████████████████

<div style="text-align: center;"> <div style="background-color: black; width: 80px; height: 1.2em; margin: 0 auto;"></div> COLLEGE SECONDARY CAMPUS </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;"> MID YEAR REPORT 2011 </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="background-color: black; width: 60px; height: 1.2em; display: inline-block;"></div> <div style="background-color: black; width: 60px; height: 1.2em; display: inline-block; margin-left: 10px;"></div> </div>													
<p style="text-align: center;">Report for: Materials Design Technology</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin-top: 20px;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">Assessment of this syllabus has been based upon the degree to which the student can:Rating A-Z</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 20px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">1. collect and use information to communicate ideas;</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: right;">NYA</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. use technology, resources and techniques to solve</td> <td style="text-align: right;">NYA</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. understand and apply occupational health, hygiene and</td> <td style="text-align: right;">NYA</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. develop skills, understanding and knowledge of systems;</td> <td style="text-align: right;">NYA</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5. work with others in teams;</td> <td style="text-align: right;">NYA</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6. plan, organise and undertake activities.</td> <td style="text-align: right;">NYA</td> </tr> </table> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">Mid Year Assessment</p>	1. collect and use information to communicate ideas;	NYA	2. use technology, resources and techniques to solve	NYA	3. understand and apply occupational health, hygiene and	NYA	4. develop skills, understanding and knowledge of systems;	NYA	5. work with others in teams;	NYA	6. plan, organise and undertake activities.	NYA	<p style="text-align: center;">YEAR 8/ XXXX</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 150px; height: 40px; margin: 20px auto; text-align: center; line-height: 40px;"> Insufficient criteria </div>
1. collect and use information to communicate ideas;	NYA												
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<p>Is a parent teacher interview required for this subject? O(O=Optional : R=Requested)</p>													

Teacher's comments:

██████ has settled in well into the class and is developing his workshop practices. His confidence in using a range of tools will improve with more experience. ██████ is mindful of safety requirements and his behaviour is good. It is difficult to assess him across all criteria due to the short time spent in this subject.

Subject Teacher: [REDACTED]

██████████ COLLEGE SECONDARY CAMPUS

MID YEAR REPORT 2011

██████████ ██████████

Report for: Music

YEAR 8/ XXXX

4

Assessment of this syllabus has been based upon the degree to which the student can: Rating A-Z

- | | | |
|----|--|-----|
| 1. | play an instrument; | NYA |
| 2. | perform for an audience; | NYA |
| 3. | work with others in an ensemble; | NYA |
| 4. | create new works; | NYA |
| 5. | demonstrate understanding of music theory; | NYA |
| 6. | show awareness of the historical and social contexts of music; | NYA |

Mid Year Assessment

Insufficient

Is a parent teacher interview required for this subject? O(O=Optional : R=Requested)

Teacher's comments:

██████ returned to mainstream classes at the beginning of Term 2, and has struggled with most aspects of the Year 8 Music course. Formal assessments relating to Music Theory and electronic amplification systems have demonstrated insufficient levels of understanding, and ██████ has struggled to stay focused on practical tasks. A significantly improved work ethic will be required for ██████ to receive a satisfactory final award.

Subject Teacher: XXXXXXXXXXXX

██████████ COLLEGE SECONDARY CAMPUS

MID YEAR REPORT 2011

██████ ██████

Report for: Pastoral Group XXXX YEAR 8

4

The Pastoral group is a significant element of the pastoral and administrative life of the College. One of the Pastoral Teacher's roles is to monitor the individual student's general performance, the student's attitude to and support of the College and the student's conduct and appearance.

Assessment of this syllabus has been based upon the degree to which the student has: Rating A-Z

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. positive contributions to the activities of the Pastoral group; | C |
| 2. support for the College expectations and rules regarding uniform | C |
| 3. involvement and participation in general life of the Pastoral Group | C |
| 4. respect and positive relationships with fellow students and staff; | C |
| 5. evidence of self-organisation and good study/homework habits | C |
| 6. evidence of initiative or leadership within the Pastoral Group and | C |

Mid Year Assessment

##

Is a parent teacher interview required for this subject? R(O=Optional : R=Requested)

Days Absent: 4 (to 12th August)

Teacher's comments:	
<p>██████ has made a good start since arriving at the beginning of Term Two. He has worn his uniform with care and he has been motivated to achieve sound diary marks. It is important for ██████ to remain settled and focused for the remainder of the year in order for him to reach his full learning potential. He has been friendly and co-operative in Pastoral Group and he will ask for assistance when required.</p>	
Pastoral Teacher: ██████ ██████	Principal's Signature: _____